THE WORKS OF FRANCIS THOMPSON

POEMS: VOLUME I.

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THE WORKS OF FRANCIS THOMPSON
POEMS: VOLUME I

Twelfth Thousand

Francis Thompson

at the age of nineteen.

THE WORKS OF
FRANCIS THOMPSON
POEMS: VOLUME I

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A NOTE by Francis Thompson's Literary Executor

IN making this Collection I have been governed by Francis Thompson's express instructions, or guided by a knowledge of his feelings and preferences acquired during an unbroken intimacy of nineteen years. His own list of new inclusions and his own suggested reconsiderations of his formerly published text have been followed in this definitive edition of his Poetical Works.

May 1913. *W. M.*

2037974

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DEDICATION OF *POEMS*

(1893)

To Wilfrid and Alice Meynell

IF the rose in meek duty
May dedicate humbly
To her grower the beauty
Wherewith she is comely;
If the mine to the miner
The jewels that pined in it,
Earth to diviner
The springs he divined in it;
To the grapes the wine-pitcher
Their juice that was crushed in it,
Viol to its witcher
The music lay hushed in it;
If the lips may pay Gladness
In laughters she wakened,
And the heart to its sadness
Weeping unslakened,
If the hid and sealed coffer,
Whose having not his is,
To the loosers may proffer
Their finding—here this is;
Their lives if all livers
To the Life of all living,—
To you, O dear givers!
I give your own giving.

DAISY

WHERE the thistle lifts a purple crown
Six foot out of the turf,
And the harebell shakes on the windy hill—
O the breath of the distant surf!—

The hills look over on the South,
And southward dreams the sea;
And with the sea-breeze hand in hand
Came innocence and she.

Where 'mid the gorse the raspberry
Red for the gatherer springs,
Two children did we stray and talk
Wise, idle, childish things.

She listened with big-lipped surprise,
Breast-deep mid flower and spine:
Her skin was like a grape whose veins
Run snow instead of wine.

She knew not those sweet words she spake,
Nor knew her own sweet way;
But there's never a bird, so sweet a song
Thronged in whose throat that day.

Oh, there were flowers in Storrington
On the turf and on the spray;
But the sweetest flower on Sussex hills
Was the Daisy-flower that day!

Her beauty smoothed earth's furrowed face.
  She gave me tokens three :—
A look, a word of her winsome mouth,
  And a wild raspberry.

A berry red, a guileless look,
  A still word,—strings of sand !
And yet they made my wild, wild heart
  Fly down to her little hand.

For standing artless as the air,
  And candid as the skies,
She took the berries with her hand,
  And the love with her sweet eyes.

The fairest things have fleetest end,
  Their scent survives their close :
But the rose's scent is bitterness
  To him that loved the rose.

She looked a little wistfully,
  Then went her sunshine way :—
The sea's eye had a mist on it,
  And the leaves fell from the day.

She went her unremembering way,
  She went and left in me
The pang of all the partings gone,
  And partings yet to be.

She left me marvelling why my soul
  Was sad that she was glad ;
At all the sadness in the sweet,
  The sweetness in the sad.

Still, still I seemed to see her, still
  Look up with soft replies,
And take the berries with her hand,
  And the love with her lovely eyes.

Nothing begins, and nothing ends,
  That is not paid with moan ;
For we are born in other's pain,
  And perish in our own.

THE POPPY

To Monica

SUMMER set lip to earth's bosom bare,
And left the flushed print in a poppy there :
Like a yawn of fire from the grass it came,
And the fanning wind puffed it to flapping flame.

With burnt mouth, red like a lion's, it drank
The blood of the sun as he slaughtered sank,
And dipped its cup in the purpurate shine
When the Eastern conduits ran with wine.

Till it grew lethargied with fierce bliss,
And hot as a swinked gipsy is,
And drowsed in sleepy savageries,
With mouth wide a-pout for a sultry kiss.

A child and man paced side by side,
Treading the skirts of eventide ;
But between the clasp of his hand and hers
Lay, felt not, twenty withered years.

She turned, with the rout of her dusk South hair,
And saw the sleeping gipsy there ;
And snatched and snapped it in swift child's whim,
With—" Keep it, long as you live ! "—to him.

And his smile, as nymphs from their laving meres,
Trembled up from a bath of tears ;
And joy, like a mew sea-rocked apart,
Tossed on the waves of his troubled heart.

For *he* saw what she did not see,
That—as kindled by its own fervency—
The verge shrivelled inward smoulderingly :
And suddenly 'twixt his hand and hers
He knew the twenty withered years—
No flower, but twenty shrivelled years.

" Was never such thing until this hour,"
Low to his heart he said ; " the flower
Of sleep brings wakening to me,
And of oblivion, memory."

" Was never this thing to me," he said,
" Though with bruisèd poppies my feet are red ! "
And again to his own heart very low :
" O child ! I love, for I love and know ;

" But you, who love nor know at all
The diverse chambers in Love's guest-hall,
Where some rise early, few sit long :
In how differing accents hear the throng
His great Pentecostal tongue ;

" Who know not love from amity,
Nor my reported self from me ;
A fair fit gift is this, meseems,
You give—this withering flower of dreams.

" O frankly fickle, and fickly true,
Do you know what the days will do to you ?
To your love and you what the days will do,
O frankly fickle, and fickly true ?

" You have loved me, Fair, three lives—or days :
'Twill pass with the passing of my face.
But where *I* go, your face goes too,
To watch lest I play false to you.

" I am but, my sweet, your foster-lover,
Knowing well when certain years are over
You vanish from me to another ;
Yet I know, and love, like the foster-mother.

" So, frankly fickle, and fickly true !
For my brief life-while I take from you
This token, fair and fit, meseems,
For me—this withering flower of dreams."

The sleep-flower sways in the wheat its head,
Heavy with dreams, as that with bread :
The goodly grain and the sun-flushed sleeper
The reaper reaps, and Time the reaper.

I hang 'mid men my needless head,
And my fruit is dreams, as theirs is bread :
The goodly men and the sun-hazed sleeper
Time shall reap, but after the reaper
The world shall glean of me, me the sleeper.

THE POPPY

Love, love! your flower of withered dream
In leavèd rhyme lies safe, I deem,
Sheltered and shut in a nook of rhyme,
From the reaper man, and his reaper Time.

Love! *I* fall into the claws of Time:
But lasts within a leavèd rhyme
All that the world of me esteems—
My withered dreams, my withered dreams.

TO MONICA THOUGHT DYING

YOU, O the piteous you !
Who all the long night through
Anticipatedly
Disclose yourself to me
Already in the ways
Beyond our human comfortable days ;
How can you deem what Death
Impitiably saith
To me, who listening wake
For your poor sake ?
When a grown woman dies
You know we think unceasingly
What things she said, how sweet, how wise ;
And these do make our misery.
But you were (you to me
The dead anticipatedly !)
You—eleven years, was't not, or so ?—
Were just a child, you know ;
And so you never said
Things sweet immeditatably and wise
To interdict from closure my wet eyes :
But foolish things, my dead, my dead !
Little and laughable,
Your age that fitted well.
And was it such things all unmemorable,
Was it such things could make
Me sob all night for your implacable sake ?

Yet, as you said to me,
In pretty make-believe of revelry,
So the night long said Death
With his magniloquent breath ;
(And that remembered laughter,
Which in our daily uses followed after,
Was all untuned to pity and to awe :)
" *A cup of chocolate,*
One farthing is the rate,
You drink it through a straw."

How could I know, how know
Those laughing words when drenched with sobbing so ?
Another voice than yours, than yours, he hath.
My dear, was't worth his breath,
His mighty utterance ?—yet he saith, and saith !
This dreadful Death to his own dreadfulness
Doth dreadful wrong,
This dreadful childish babble on his tongue.
That iron tongue made to speak sentences,
And wisdom insupportably complete,
Why should it only say the long night through,
In mimicry of you,—
" *A cup of chocolate,*
One farthing is the rate,
You drink it through a straw, a straw, a straw ! "

Oh, of all sentences,
Piercingly incomplete !
Why did you teach that fatal mouth to draw,
Child, impermissible awe,

From your old trivialness ?
Why have you done me this
Most unsustainable wrong,
And into Death's control
Betrayed the secret places of my soul ?—
Teaching him that his lips,
Uttering their native earthquake and eclipse,
Could never so avail
To rend from hem to hem the ultimate veil
Of this most desolate
Spirit, and leave it stripped and desecrate,—
Nay, never so have wrung
From eyes and speech weakness unmanned, unmeet,
As when his terrible dotage to repeat
Its little lesson learneth at your feet ;
As when he sits among
His sepulchres, to play
With broken toys your hand has cast away,
With derelict trinkets of the darling young.
Why have you taught—that he might so complete
His awful panoply
From your cast playthings—why,
This dreadful childish babble to his tongue,
Dreadful and sweet ?

THE MAKING OF VIOLA

I

The Father of Heaven.

SPIN, daughter Mary, spin,
Twirl your wheel with silver din ;
Spin, daughter Mary, spin,
Spin a tress for Viola.

Angels.

Spin, Queen Mary, a
Brown tress for Viola !

II

The Father of Heaven.

Weave, hands angelical,
Weave a woof of flesh to pall—
Weave, hands angelical—
Flesh to pall our Viola.

Angels.

Weave, singing brothers, a
Velvet flesh for Viola !

III

The Father of Heaven.

Scoop, young Jesus, for her eyes,
Wood-browned pools of Paradise—
Young Jesus, for the eyes,
For the eyes of Viola.

Angels.

Tint, Prince Jesus, a
Duskèd eye for Viola!

IV

The Father of Heaven.

Cast a star therein to drown,
Like a torch in cavern brown,
Sink a burning star to drown
Whelmed in eyes of Viola.

Angels.

Lave, Prince Jesus, a
Star in eyes of Viola!

V

The Father of Heaven.

Breathe, Lord Paraclete,
To a bubbled crystal meet—
Breathe, Lord Paraclete—
Crystal soul for Viola.

Angels.

Breathe, Regal Spirit, a
Flashing soul for Viola!

VI

The Father of Heaven.

Child-angels, from your wings
Fall the roseal hoverings,
Child-angels, from your wings,
On the cheeks of Viola.

Angels.

Linger, rosy reflex, a
Quenchless stain, on Viola!

VII

All things being accomplished, saith the Father of Heaven:

Bear her down, and bearing, sing,
Bear her down on spyless wing,
Bear her down, and bearing, sing,
With a sound of viola.

Angels.

Music as her name is, a
Sweet sound of Viola!

VIII

Wheeling angels, past espial,
Danced her down with sound of viol;
Wheeling angels, past espial,
Descanting on "Viola."

Angels.

Sing, in our footing, a
Lovely lilt of "Viola!"

IX

Baby smiled, mother wailed,
Earthward while the sweetling sailed;
Mother smiled, baby wailed,
When to earth came Viola.

And her elders shall say:

So soon have we taught you a
Way to weep, poor Viola!

x

Smile, sweet baby, smile,
For you will have weeping-while ;
Native in your Heaven is smile,—
But your weeping, Viola ?

Whence your smiles we know, but ah !
Whence your weeping, Viola ?—
Our first gift to you is a
Gift of tears, my Viola !

TO MY GODCHILD

Francis M. W. M.

THIS labouring, vast, Tellurian galleon,
Riding at anchor off the orient sun,
Had broken its cable, and stood out to space
Down some frore Arctic of the aërial ways:
And now, back warping from the inclement main,
Its vaporous shroudage drenched with icy rain,
It swung into its azure roads again;
When, floated on the prosperous sun-gale, you
Lit, a white halcyon auspice, 'mid our frozen crew.

To the Sun, stranger, surely you belong,
Giver of golden days and golden song;
Nor is it by an all-unhappy plan
You bear the name of me, his constant Magian.
Yet ah! from any other that it came,
Lest fated to my fate you be, as to my name.
When at the first those tidings did they bring,
My heart turned troubled at the ominous thing:
Though well may such a title him endower,
For whom a poet's prayer implores a poet's power.
The Assisian, who kept plighted faith to three,
To Song, to Sanctitude, and Poverty,
(In two alone of whom most singers prove
A fatal faithfulness of during love!);
He the sweet Sales, of whom we scarcely ken
How God he could love more, he so loved men;
The crown and crowned of Laura and Italy;
And Fletcher's fellow—from these, and not from me,
Take you your name, and take your legacy!

Or, if a right successive you declare
When worms, for ivies, intertwine my hair,
Take but this Poesy that now followeth
My clayey hest with sullen servile breath,
Made then your happy freedman by testating death.
My song I do but hold for you in trust,
I ask you but to blossom from my dust.
When you have compassed all weak I began,
Diviner poet, and ah! diviner man;
The man at feud with the perduring child
In you before Song's altar nobly reconciled;
From the wise heavens I half shall smile to see
How little a world, which owned you, needed me.
If, while you keep the vigils of the night,
For your wild tears make darkness all too bright,
Some lone orb through your lonely window peeps,
As it played lover over your sweet sleeps;
Think it a golden crevice in the sky,
Which I have pierced but to behold you by!

And when, immortal mortal, droops your head,
And you, the child of deathless song, are dead;
Then, as you search with unaccustomed glance
The ranks of Paradise for my countenance,
Turn not your tread along the Uranian sod
Among the bearded counsellors of God;
For if in Eden as on earth are we,
I sure shall keep a younger company:
Pass where beneath their rangèd gonfalons
The starry cohorts shake their shielded suns,
The dreadful mass of their enridgèd spears;

TO MY GODCHILD

Pass where majestical the eternal peers,
The stately choice of the great Saintdom, meet—
A silvern segregation, globed complete
In sandalled shadow of the Triune feet ;
Pass by where wait, young poet-wayfarer,
Your cousined clusters, emulous to share
With you the roseal lightnings burning 'mid their hair ;
Pass the crystalline sea, the Lampads seven :—
Look for me in the nurseries of Heaven.

TO OLIVIA

I FEAR to love thee, Sweet, because
Love's the ambassador of loss;
White flake of childhood, clinging so
To my soiled raiment, thy shy snow
At tenderest touch will shrink and go.
Love me not, delightful child.
My heart, by many snares beguiled,
Has grown timorous and wild.
It would fear thee not at all,
Wert thou not so harmless-small.
Because thy arrows, not yet dire,
Are still unbarbed with destined fire,
I fear thee more than hadst thou stood
Full-panoplied in womanhood.

LITTLE JESUS

Ex ore infantium, Deus, et lactentium
perfecisti laudem

LITTLE Jesus, wast Thou shy
Once, and just so small as I ?
And what did it feel like to be
Out of Heaven, and just like me ?
Didst Thou sometimes think of *there*,
And ask where all the angels were ?
I should think that I would cry
For my house all made of sky ;
I would look about the air,
And wonder where my angels were ;
And at waking 'twould distress me—
Not an angel there to dress me !
Hadst Thou ever any toys,
Like us little girls and boys ?
And didst Thou play in Heaven with all
The angels that were not too tall,
With stars for marbles ? Did the things
Play *Can you see me ?* through their wings ?
And did Thy Mother let Thee spoil
Thy robes, with playing on *our* soil ?
How nice to have them always new
In Heaven, because 'twas quite clean blue !

Didst Thou kneel at night to pray,
And didst Thou join Thy hands, this way ?
And did they tire sometimes, being young,
And make the prayer seem very long ?

And dost Thou like it best, that we
Should join our hands to pray to Thee ?
I used to think, before I knew,
The prayer not said unless we do.
And did Thy Mother at the night
Kiss Thee, and fold the clothes in right ?
And didst Thou feel quite good in bed,
Kissed, and sweet, and Thy prayers said ?

Thou canst not have forgotten all
That it feels like to be small :
And Thou know'st I cannot pray
To Thee in my father's way—
When Thou wast so little, say,
Couldst Thou talk Thy Father's way ?—

So, a little Child, come down
And hear a child's tongue like Thy own ;
Take me by the hand and walk,
And listen to my baby-talk.
To Thy Father show my prayer
(He will look, Thou art so fair),
And say : " O Father, I, Thy Son,
Bring the prayer of a little one."

And He will smile, that children's tongue
Has not changed since Thou wast young !

SISTER SONGS

AN OFFERING TO TWO SISTERS
MONICA & MADELINE (SYLVIA)

SISTER SONGS

AN OFFERING TO TWO SISTERS

THE PROEM

SHREWD winds and shrill—were these the
speech of May ?
A ragged, slag-grey sky—invested so,
Mary's spoilt nursling ! wert thou wont to go ?
Or *thou*, Sun-god and song-god, say
Could singer pipe one tiniest linnet-lay,
While Song did turn away his face from song ?
Or who could be
In spirit or in body hale for long,—
Old Æsculap's best Master !—lacking thee ?
At length, then, thou art here !
On the earth's lethèd ear
Thy voice of light rings out exultant, strong ;
Through dreams she stirs and murmurs at that
summons dear :
From its red leash my heart strains tamelessly,
For Spring leaps in the womb of the young year !
Nay, was it not brought forth before,
And we waited, to behold it,
Till the sun's hand should unfold it,
What the year's young bosom bore ?
Even so ; it came, nor knew we that it came,
In the sun's eclipse.
Yet the birds have plighted vows,
And from the branches pipe each other's name ;

Yet the season all the boughs
Has kindled to the finger-tips,—
Mark yonder, how the long laburnum drips
Its jocund spilth of fire, its honey of wild flame!
Yea, and myself put on swift quickening,
And answer to the presence of a sudden Spring.

From cloud-zoned pinnacles of the secret spirit
Song falls precipitant in dizzying streams;
And, like a mountain-hold when war-shouts stir it,
The mind's recessèd fastness casts to light
Its gleaming multitudes, that from every height
Unfurl the flaming of a thousand dreams.
Now therefore, thou who bring'st the year to birth,
Who guid'st the bare and dabbled feet of May;
Sweet stem to that rose Christ, who from the earth
Suck'st our poor prayers, conveying them to Him;
Be aidant, tender Lady, to my lay!
Of thy two maidens somewhat must I say,
Ere shadowy twilight lashes, drooping, dim
Day's dreamy eyes from us;
Ere eve has struck and furled
The beamy-textured tent transpicuous,
Of webbèd cœrule wrought and woven calms,
Whence has paced forth the lambent-footed sun.
And thou disclose my flower of song upcurled,
Who from thy fair irradiant palms
Scatterest all love and loveliness as alms;
Yea, holy one,
Who coin'st thyself to beauty for the world!

Then, Spring's little children, your lauds do ye upraise
To Sylvia, O Sylvia, her sweet, feat ways!
Your lovesome labours lay away,
And trick you out in holiday,
For syllabling to Sylvia;
And all you birds on branches, lave your mouths with May,
To bear with me this burthen,
For singing to Sylvia.

PART THE FIRST

THE leaves dance, the leaves sing,
The leaves dance in the breath of the Spring.
I bid them dance,
I bid them sing,
For the limpid glance
Of my ladyling;
For the gift to the Spring of a dewier spring,
For God's good grace of this ladyling!
I know in the lane, by the hedgerow track,
The long, broad grasses underneath
Are warted with rain like a toad's knobbed back;
But here May weareth a rainless wreath.
In the new-sucked milk of the sun's bosom
Is dabbled the mouth of the daisy-blossom;
The smouldering rosebud chars through its sheath;
The lily stirs her snowy limbs,
Ere she swims
Naked up through her cloven green,
Like the wave-born Lady of Love Hellene;

And the scattered snowdrop exquisite
Twinkles and gleams,
As if the showers of the sunny beams
Were splashed from the earth in drops of light.
Everything
That is child of Spring
Casts its bud or blossoming
Upon the stream of my delight.

Their voices, that scents are, now let them upraise
To Sylvia, O Sylvia, her sweet, feat ways ;
Their lovely mother them array,
And prank them out in holiday,
For syllabling to Sylvia ;
And all the birds on branches lave their mouths with May,
To bear with me this burthen,
For singing to Sylvia.

While thus I stood in mazes bound
Of vernal sorcery,
I heard a dainty dubious sound,
As of goodly melody ;
Which first was faint as if in swound,
Then burst so suddenly
In warring concord all around,
That, whence this thing might be,
To see
The very marrow longed in me !
It seemed of air, it seemed of ground,
And never any witchery
Drawn from pipe, or reed, or string,
Made such dulcet ravishing.

'Twas like no earthly instrument,
Yet had something of them all
In its rise, and in its fall;
As if in one sweet consort there were blent
Those archetypes celestial
Which our endeavouring instruments recall.
So heavenly flutes made murmurous plain
To heavenly viols, that again
—Aching with music—wailed back pain;
Regals release their notes, which rise
Welling, like tears from heart to eyes;
And the harp thrills with thronging sighs.
Horns in mellow flattering
Parley with the cithern-string:—
Hark!—the floating, long-drawn note
Woos the throbbing cithern-string!

Their pretty, pretty prating those citherns sure upraise
For homage unto Sylvia, her sweet, feat ways:
Those flutes do flute their vowelled lay,
Their lovely languid language say,
For lisping to Sylvia;
Those viols' lissom bowings break the heart of May,
And harps harp their burthen,
For singing to Sylvia.

Now at that music and that mirth
Rose, as 'twere, veils from earth;
And I spied
How beside
Bud, bell, bloom, an elf

Stood, or was the flower itself ;
'Mid radiant air
All the fair
Frequence swayed in irised wavers.
Some against the gleaming rims
Their bosoms prest
Of the kingcups, to the brims
Filled with sun, and their white limbs
Bathèd in those golden lavers ;
Some on the brown, glowing breast
Of that Indian maid, the pansy
(Through its tenuous veils confest
Of swathing light), in a quaint fancy
Tied her knot of yellow favours ;
Others dared open draw
Snapdragon's dreadful jaw :
Some, just sprung from out the soil,
Sleeked and shook their rumpled fans
Dropt with sheen
Of moony green ;
Others, not yet extricate,
On their hands leaned their weight,
And writhed them free with mickle toil,
Still folded in their veiny vans :
And all with an unsought accord
Sang together from the sward ;
Whence had come, and from sprites
Yet unseen, those delights,
As of tempered musics blent,
Which had given me such content.
For haply our best instrument,

Pipe or cithern, stopped or strung,
Mimics but some spirit tongue.

Their amiable voices, I bid them upraise
To Sylvia, O Sylvia, her sweet, feat ways ;
Their lovesome labours laid away,
To linger out this holiday
In syllabling to Sylvia ;
While all the birds on branches lave their mouths with May,
To bear with me this burthen,
For singing to Sylvia.

Next I saw, wonder-whist,
How from the atmosphere a mist,
So it seemed, slow uprist ;
And, looking from those elfin swarms,
I was 'ware
How the air
Was all populous with forms
Of the Hours, floating down,
Like Nereids through a watery town.
Some, with languors of waved arms,
Fluctuous oared their flexile way ;
Some were borne half resupine
On the aërial hyaline,
Their fluid limbs and rare array
Flickering on the wind, as quivers
Trailing weed in running rivers ;
And others, in far prospect seen,
Newly loosed on this terrene,
Shot in piercing swiftness came,

With hair a-stream like pale and goblin flame.
As crystálline ice in water,
Lay in air each faint daughter;
Inseparate (or but separate dim)
Circumfused wind from wind-like vest,
Wind-like vest from wind-like limb.
But outward from each lucid breast,
When some passion left its haunt,
Radiate surge of colour came,
Diffusing blush-wise, palpitant,
Dying all the filmy frame.
With some sweet tenderness they would
Turn to an amber-clear and glossy gold;
Or a fine sorrow, lovely to behold,
Would sweep them as the sun and wind's joined flood
Sweeps a greening-sapphire sea;
Or they would glow enamouredly
Illustrious sanguine, like a grape of blood;
Or with mantling poetry
Curd to the tincture which the opal hath,
Like rainbows thawing in a moonbeam bath.
So paled they, flushed they, swam they, sang melodiously

Their chanting, soon fading, let them, too, upraise
For homage unto Sylvia, her sweet, feat ways;
Weave with suave float their wavèd way,
And colours take of holiday,
For syllabling to Sylvia;
And all the birds on branches lave their mouths with May,
To bear with me this burthen,
For singing to Sylvia.

Then, through those translucencies,
As grew my senses clearer clear,
Did I see, and did I hear,
How under an elm's canopy
Wheeled a flight of Dryades
Murmuring measured melody.
Gyre in gyre their treading was,
Wheeling with an adverse flight,
In twi-circle o'er the grass,
These to left, and those to right;
    All the band
Linkèd by each other's hand;
Decked in raiment stainèd as
The blue-helmèd aconite.
And they advance with flutter, with grace,
    To the dance,
Moving on with a dainty pace,
As blossoms mince it on river swells.
Over their heads their cymbals shine,
Round each ankle gleams a twine
    Of twinkling bells—
Tune twirled golden from their cells.
Every step was a tinkling sound,
As they glanced in their dancing-ground.
Clouds in cluster with such a sailing
Float o'er the light of the wasting moon,
As the cloud of their gliding veiling
Swung in the sway of the dancing-tune.
There was the clash of their cymbals clanging,
Ringing of swinging bells clinging their feet;
And the clang on wing it seemed a-hanging,

Hovering round their dancing so fleet.—
I stirred, I rustled more than meet ;
Whereat they broke to the left and right,
With eddying robes like aconite
Blue of helm ;
And I beheld to the foot o' the elm.

They have not tripped those dances, betrayed to my gaze,
To glad the heart of Sylvia, beholding of their maze ;
Through barky walls have slid away,
And tricked them in their holiday,
For other than for Sylvia ;
While all the birds on branches lave their mouths with May,
And bear with me this burthen,
For singing to Sylvia.

Where its umbrage was enrooted,
Sat, white-suited,
Sat, green-amiced and bare-footed,
Spring, amid her minstrelsy ;
There she sat amid her ladies,
Where the shade is
Sheen as Enna mead ere Hades'
Gloom fell 'thwart Persephone.
Dewy buds were interstrown
Through her tresses hanging down,
And her feet
Were most sweet,
Tinged like sea-stars, rosied brown.
A throng of children like to flowers were sown
About the grass beside, or clomb her knee :
I looked who were that favoured company.

And one there stood
Against the beamy flood
Of sinking day, which, pouring its abundance,
Sublimed the illuminous and volute redundance
Of locks that, half dissolving, floated round her face ;
As see I might
Far off a lily-cluster poised in sun
Dispread its gracile curls of light.
I knew what chosen child was there in place !
I knew there might no brows be, save of one,
With such Hesperian fulgence compassèd,
Which in her moving seemed to wheel about her head.

O Spring's little children, more loud your lauds upraise,
For this is even Sylvia, with her sweet, feat ways !
Your lovesome labours lay away,
And prank you out in holiday,
For syllabling to Sylvia ;
And all you birds on branches, lave your mouths with May,
To bear with me this burthen,
For singing to Sylvia !

Spring, goddess, is it thou, desirèd long ?
And art thou girded round with this young train ?—
If ever I did do thee ease in song,
Now of thy grace let me one meed obtain,
And list thou to one plain.
Oh, keep still in thy train,
After the years when others therefrom fade,
This tiny, well-belovèd maid !
To whom the gate of my heart's fortalice,

With all which in it is,
And the shy self who doth therein immew him
'Gainst what loud leaguerers battailously woo him,
I, bribèd traitor to him,
Set open for one kiss.

Then suffer, Spring, thy children, that lauds they should upraise
To Sylvia, this Sylvia, her sweet, feat ways ;
Their lovely labours lay away,
And trick them out in holiday,
For syllabling to Sylvia ;
And that all birds on branches lave their mouths with May,
To bear with me this burthen,
For singing to Sylvia.

A kiss ? for a child's kiss ?
Aye, goddess, even for this.
Once, bright Sylviola, in days not far,
Once—in that nightmare-time which still doth haunt
My dreams, a grim, unbidden visitant—
Forlorn, and faint, and stark,
I had endured through watches of the dark
The abashless inquisition of each star,
Yea, was the outcast mark
Of all those heavenly passers' scrutiny ;
Stood bound and helplessly
For Time to shoot his barbèd minutes at me ;
Suffered the trampling hoof of every hour
In night's slow-wheelèd car ;
Until the tardy dawn dragged me at length
From under those dread wheels ; and, bled of strength,

I waited the inevitable last.
Then there came past
A child ; like thee, a spring-flower ; but a flower
Fallen from the budded coronal of Spring,
And through the city-streets blown withering.
She passed,—O brave, sad, lovingest, tender thing !
And of her own scant pittance did she give,
That I might eat and live :
Then fled, a swift and trackless fugitive.
Therefore I kissed in thee
The heart of Childhood, so divine for me ;
And her, through what sore ways,
And what unchildish days,
Borne from me now, as then, a trackless fugitive.
Therefore I kissed in thee
Her, child ! and innocency,
And spring, and all things that have gone from me,
And that shall never be ;
All vanished hopes, and all most hopeless bliss,
Came with thee to my kiss.
And ah ! so long myself had strayed afar
From child, and woman, and the boon earth's green,
And all wherewith life's face is fair beseen ;
Journeying its journey bare
Five suns, except of the all-kissing sun
Unkissed of one ;
Almost I had forgot
The healing harms,
And whitest witchery, a-lurk in that
Authentic cestus of two girdling arms :
And I remembered not

The subtle sanctities which dart
From childish lips' unvalued precious brush,
Nor how it makes the sudden lilies push
Between the loosening fibres of the heart.
Then, that thy little kiss
Should be to me all this,
Let workaday wisdom blink sage lids thereat;
Which towers a flight three hedgerows high, poor bat!
And straightway charts me out the empyreal air.
Its chart I wing not by, its canon of worth
Scorn not, nor reck though mine should breed it mirth:
And howso thou and I may be disjoint,
Yet still my falcon spirit makes her point
Over the covert where
Thou, sweetest quarry, hast put in from her!

(Soul, hush these sad numbers, too sad to upraise
In hymning bright Sylvia, unlearn'd in such ways!
Our mournful moods lay we away,
And prank our thoughts in holiday,
For syllabling to Sylvia;
When all the birds on branches lave their mouths with May,
To bear with us this burthen,
For singing to Sylvia!)

Then thus Spring, bounteous lady, made reply:
'O lover of me and all my progeny,
For grace to you
I take her ever to my retinue.
Over thy form, dear child, alas! my art
Cannot prevail; but mine immortalizing

Touch I lay upon thy heart.
Thy soul's fair shape
In my unfading mantle's green I drape,
And thy white mind shall rest by my devising
A Gideon-fleece amid life's dusty drouth.
If Even burst yon globèd yellow grape
(Which is the sun to mortals' sealèd sight)
Against her stainèd mouth;
Or if white-handed light
Draw thee yet dripping from the quiet pools,
Still lucencies and cools,
Of sleep, which all night mirror constellate dreams;
Like to the sign which led the Israelite,
Thy soul, through day or dark,
A visible brightness on the chosen ark
Of thy sweet body and pure,
Shall it assure,
With auspice large and tutelary gleams,
Appointed solemn courts, and covenanted streams.'

Cease, Spring's little children, now cease your lauds to raise;
That dream is past, and Sylvia, with her sweet, feat ways.
Our lovèd labour, laid away,
Is smoothly ended; said our say,
Our syllabling to Sylvia.
Make sweet, you birds on branches! make sweet your mouths with May!
But borne is this burthen,
Sung unto Sylvia.

PART THE SECOND

And now, thou elder nursling of the nest;
Ere all the intertangled west
Be one magnificence
Of multitudinous blossoms that o'errun
The flaming brazen bowl o' the burnished sun
Which they do flower from,
How shall I 'stablish *thy* memorial?
Nay, how or with what countenance shall I come
To plead in my defence
For loving thee at all?
I who can scarcely speak my fellows' speech,
Love their love, or mine own love to them teach;
A bastard barred from their inheritance,
Who seem, in this dim shape's uneasy nook,
Some sun-flower's spirit which by luckless chance
Has mournfully its tenement mistook;
When it were better in its right abode,
Heartless and happy lackeying its god.
How com'st thou, little tender thing of white,
Whose very touch full scantly me beseems,
How com'st thou resting on my vaporous dreams,
Kindling a wraith there of earth's vernal green?
Even so as I have seen,
In night's aërial sea with no wind blust'rous,
A ribbèd tract of cloudy malachite
Curve a shored crescent wide;
And on its slope marge shelving to the night
The stranded moon lay quivering like a lustrous
Medusa newly washed up from the tide,
Lay in an oozy pool of its own deliquious light.

Yet hear how my excuses may prevail,
Nor, tender white orb, be thou opposite!
Life and life's beauty only hold their revels
In the abysmal ocean's luminous levels.
There, like the phantasms of a poet pale,
The exquisite marvels sail:
Clarified silver; greens and azures frail
As if the colours sighed themselves away,
And blent in supersubtile interplay
As if they swooned into each other's arms;
Repured vermilion,
Like ear-tips 'gainst the sun;
And beings that, under night's swart pinion,
Make every wave upon the harbour-bars
A beaten yolk of stars.
But where day's glance turns baffled from the deeps,
Die out those lovely swarms;
And in the immense profound no creature glides or creeps.

Love and love's beauty only hold their revels
In life's familiar, penetrable levels:
What of its ocean-floor?
I dwell there evermore.
From almost earliest youth
I raised the lids o' the truth,
And forced her bend on me her shrinking sight;
Ever I knew me Beauty's eremite,
In antre of this lowly body set,
Girt with a thirsty solitude of soul.
Natheless I not forget
How I have, even as the anchorite,

I too, imperishing essences that console.
Under my ruined passions, fallen and sere,
The wild dreams stir, like little radiant girls
Whom in the moulted plumage of the year
Their comrades sweet have buried to the curls.
Yet, though their dedicated amorist,
How often do I bid my visions hist,
Deaf to them, pleading all their piteous fills;
Who weep, as weep the maidens of the mist
Clinging the necks of the unheeding hills:
And their tears wash them lovelier than before,
That from grief's self our sad delight grows more.
Fair are the soul's uncrispèd calms, indeed,
Endiapered with many a spiritual form
Of blosmy-tinctured weed;
But scarce itself is conscious of the store
Suckled by it, and only after storm
Casts up its loosened thoughts upon the shore.
To this end my deeps are stirred;
And I deem well why life unshared
Was ordainèd me of yore.
In pairing-time, we know, the bird
Kindles to its deepmost splendour,
And the tender
Voice is tenderest in its throat:
Were its love, for ever nigh it,
Never by it,
It might keep a vernal note,
The crocean and amethystine
In their pristine
Lustre linger on its coat.

Therefore must my song-bower lone be,
That my tone be
Fresh with dewy pain alway;
She, who scorns my dearest care ta'en,
An uncertain
Shadow of the sprite of May.
And is my song sweet, as they say?
'Tis sweet for one whose voice has no reply,
Save silence's sad cry:
And are its plumes a burning bright array?
They burn for an unincarnated eye.
A bubble, charioteered by the inward breath
Which, ardorous for its own invisible lure,
Urges me glittering to aërial death,
I am rapt towards that bodiless paramour;
Blindly the uncomprehended tyranny
Obeying of my heart's impetuous might.
The earth and all its planetary kin,
Starry buds tangled in the whirling hair
That flames round the Phœbean wassailer,
Speed no more ignorant, more predestined flight,
Than I, *her* viewless tresses netted in.
As some most beautiful one, with lovely taunting,
Her eyes of guileless guile o'ercanopies,
Does her hid visage bow,
And miserly your covetous gaze allow,
By inchmeal, coy degrees,
Saying—'Can you see me now?'
Yet from the mouth's reflex you guess the wanting
Smile of the coming eyes
In all their upturned grievous witcheries,

Before that sunbreak rise;
And each still hidden feature view within
Your mind, as eager scrutinies detail
The moon's young rondure through the shamefast veil
Drawn to her gleaming chin:
After this wise,
From the enticing smile of earth and skies
I dream my unknown Fair's refusèd gaze;
And guessingly her love's close traits devise,
Which she with subtile coquetries
Through little human glimpses slow displays,
Cozening my mateless days
By sick, intolerable delays.
And so I keep mine uncompanioned ways;
And so my touch, to golden poesies
Turning love's bread, is bought at hunger's price.
So,—in the inextinguishable wars
Which roll song's Orient on the sullen night
Whose ragged banners in their own despite
Take on the tinges of the hated light,—
So Sultan Phœbus has his Janizars.
But if mine unappeasèd cicatrices
Might get them lawful ease;
Were any gentle passion hallowed me,
Who must none other breath of passion feel
Save such as winnows to the fledgèd heel
The tremulous Paradisal plumages;
The conscious sacramental trees
Which ever be
Shaken celestially,
Consentient with enamoured wings, might know my love for thee.

Yet is there more, whereat none guesseth, love!
Upon the ending of my deadly night
(Whereof thou hast not the surmise, and slight
Is all that any mortal knows thereof),
Thou wert to me that earnest of day's light,
When, like the back of a gold-mailèd saurian
Heaving its slow length from Nilotic slime,
The first long gleaming fissure runs Aurorian
Athwart the yet dun firmament of prime.
Stretched on the margin of the cruel sea
Whence they had rescued me,
With faint and painful pulses was I lying;
Not yet discerning well
If I had 'scaped, or were an icicle,
Whose thawing is its dying.
Like one who sweats before a despot's gate,
Summoned by some presaging scroll of fate,
And knows not whether kiss or dagger wait;
And all so sickened is his countenance,
The courtiers buzz, 'Lo, doomed!' and look at him askance:—
At Fate's dread portal then
Even so stood I, I ken,
Even so stood I, between a joy and fear,
And said to mine own heart, 'Now if the end be here!'

They say, Earth's beauty seems completest
To them that on their death-beds rest;
Gentle lady! she smiles sweetest
Just ere she clasps us to her breast.

And I,—now *my* Earth's countenance grew bright,
Did she but smile me towards that nuptial-night ?
But, whileas on such dubious bed I lay,
One unforgotten day,
As a sick child waking sees
Wide-eyed daisies
Gazing on it from its hand,
Slipped there for its dear amazes ;
So between thy father's knees
I saw *thee* stand,
And through my hazes
Of pain and fear thine eyes' young wonder shone.
Then, as flies scatter from a carrion,
Or rooks in spreading gyres like broken smoke
Wheel, when some sound their quietude has broke,
Fled, at thy countenance, all that doubting spawn :
The heart which I had questioned spoke,
A cry impetuous from its depth was drawn,—
' I take the omen of this face of dawn ! '
And with the omen to my heart cam'st thou.
Even with a spray of tears
That one light draft was fixed there for the years.

And now ?—
The hours I tread ooze memories of thee, Sweet,
Beneath my casual feet.
With rainfall as the lea,
The day is drenched with thee ;
In little exquisite surprises
Bubbling deliciousness of thee arises
From sudden places,

Under the common traces
Of my most lethargied and customed paces.

As an Arab journeyeth
Through a sand of Ayaman,
Lean Thirst, lolling its cracked tongue,
Lagging by his side along;
And a rusty-wingèd Death
Grating its low flight before,
Casting ribbèd shadows o'er
The blank desert, blank and tan:
He lifts by hap toward where the morning's roots are
His weary stare,—
Sees, although they plashless mutes are,
Set in a silver air
Fountains of gelid shoots are,
Making the daylight fairest fair;
Sees the palm and tamarind
Tangle the tresses of a phantom wind;—
A sight like innocence when one has sinned!
A green and maiden freshness smiling there,
While with unblinking glare
The tawny-hided desert crouches watching her.

'Tis a vision:
Yet the greeneries Elysian
He has known in tracts afar;
Thus the enamouring fountains flow,
Those the very palms that grow,
By rare-gummed Sava, or Herbalimar.—
Such a watered dream has tarried

Trembling on my desert arid;
Even so
Its lovely gleamings
Seemings show
Of things not seemings;
And I gaze,
Knowing that, beyond my ways,
Verily
All these *are*, for these are She.

Eve no gentlier lays her cooling cheek
On the burning brow of the sick earth,
Sick with death, and sick with birth,
Aeon to aeon, in secular fever twirled,
Than thy shadow soothes this weak
And distempered being of mine.
In all I work, my hand includeth thine;
Thou rushest down in every stream
Whose passion frets my spirit's deepening gorge;
Unhood'st mine eyas-heart, and fliest my dream;
Thou swing'st the hammers of my forge;
As the innocent moon, that nothing does but shine,
Moves all the labouring surges of the world.
Pierce where thou wilt the springing thought in me,
And there thy pictured countenance lies enfurled,
As in the cut fern lies the imaged tree.
This poor song that sings of thee,
This fragile song, is but a curled
Shell outgathered from thy sea,
And murmurous still of its nativity.
Princess of Smiles,

Sorceress of most unlawful-lawful wiles,
Cunning pit for gazers' senses,
Overstrewn with innocences!
Purities gleam white like statues
In the fair lakes of thine eyes,
And I watch the sparkles that use
There to rise,
Knowing these
Are bubbles from the calyces
Of the lovely thoughts that breathe
Paving, like water-flowers, thy spirit's floor beneath.

O thou most dear!
Who art thy sex's complex harmony
God-set more facilely;
To thee may love draw near
Without one blame or fear,
Unchidden save by his humility:
Thou Perseus' Shield wherein I view secure
The mirrored Woman's fateful-fair allure!
Whom Heaven still leaves a twofold dignity,
As girlhood gentle, and as boyhood free;
With whom no most diaphanous webs enwind
The barèd limbs of the rebukeless mind.
Wild Dryad, all unconscious of thy tree,
With which indissolubly
The tyrannous time shall one day make thee whole;
Whose frank arms pass unfretted through its bole;
Who wear'st thy femineity
Light as entrailèd blossoms, that shalt find
It erelong silver shackles unto thee:

Thou whose young sex is yet but in thy soul ;—
As hoarded in the vine
Hang the gold skins of undelirious wine,
As air sleeps, till it toss its limbs in breeze ;—
In whom the mystery which lures and sunders,
Grapples and thrusts apart, endears, estranges,
—The dragon to its own Hesperides—
Is gated under slow-revolving changes,
Manifold doors of heavy-hingèd years :—
So once, ere Heaven's eyes were filled with wonders
To see Laughter rise from Tears,
Lay in beauty not yet mighty,
Conchèd in translucencies,
The antenatal Aphrodite,
Caved magically under magic seas ;
Caved dreamlessly beneath the dreamful seas.

'Whose sex is in thy soul!'
What think we of thy soul ?
Which has no parts, and cannot grow,
Unfurled not from an embryo ;
Born of full stature, lineal to control ;
And yet a pigmy's yoke must undergo :
Yet must keep pace and tarry, patient, kind,
With its unwilling scholar, the dull, tardy mind ;
Must be obsequious to the body's powers,
Whose low hands mete its paths, set ope and close its ways ;
Must do obeisance to the days,
And wait the little pleasure of the hours ;
Yea, ripe for kingship, yet must be

Captive in statuted minority!
So is all power fulfilled, as soul in thee.
So still the ruler by the ruled takes rule,
And wisdom weaves itself i' the loom o' the fool.
The splendent sun no splendour can display
Till on gross things he dash his broken ray,
From cloud and tree and flower re-tossed in prismy
spray.
Did not obstruction's vessel hem it in,
Force were not force, would spill itself in vain;
We know the Titan by his champèd chain.
Stay is heat's cradle, it is rocked therein,
And by check's hand is burnished into light;
If hate were none, would love burn lowlier bright?
God's Fair were guessed scarce but for opposite sin;
Yea, and His Mercy, I do think it well,
Is flashed back from the brazen gates of Hell.
The heavens decree
All power fulfil itself as soul in thee.
For supreme Spirit subject was to clay,
And Law from its own servants learned a law,
And Light besought a lamp unto its way,
And Awe was reined in awe,
At one small house of Nazareth;
And Golgotha
Saw Breath to breathlessness resign its breath,
And Life do homage for its crown to death.

So is all power, as soul in thee, increased!
But, knowing this, in knowledge's despite
I fret against the law severe that stains

Thy spirit with eclipse ;
When—as a nymph's carven head sweet water drips,
For others oozing so the cool delight
Which cannot steep her stiffened mouth of stone—
Thy nescient lips repeat maternal strains.
Memnonian lips !
Smitten with singing from thy mother's East,
And murmurous with music not their own :
Nay, the lips flexile, while the mind alone
A passionless statue stands.
Oh, pardon, innocent one !
Pardon at thine unconscious hands !
'Murmurous with music not their own,' I say ?
And in that saying how do I missay,
When from the common sands
Of poorest common speech of common day
Thine accents sift the golden musics out !
And ah, we poets, I misdoubt,
Are little more than thou !
We speak a lesson taught we know not how,
And what it is that from us flows
The hearer better than the utterer knows.

Thou canst foreshape thy word ;
The poet is not lord
Of the next syllable may come
With the returning pendulum ;
And what he plans to-day in song,
To-morrow sings it in another tongue.
Where the last leaf fell from his bough,
He knows not if a leaf shall grow ;

Where he sows he doth not reap,
He reapeth where he did not sow ;
He sleeps, and dreams forsake his sleep
To meet him on his waking way.
Vision will mate him not by law and vow :
Disguised in life's most hodden-grey,
By the most beaten road of everyday
She waits him, unsuspected and unknown.
The hardest pang whereon
He lays his mutinous head may be a Jacob's stone.
In the most iron crag his foot can tread
A Dream may strew her bed,
And suddenly his limbs entwine,
And draw him down through rock as sea-nymphs might through brine.
But, unlike those feigned temptress-ladies who
In guerdon of a night the lover slew,
When the embrace has failed, the rapture fled,
Not he, not he, the wild sweet witch is dead !
And though he cherisheth
The babe most strangely born from out her death,
Some tender trick of her it hath, maybe,—
It is not she !

Yet, even as the air is rumorous of fray
Before the first shafts of the sun's onslaught
From gloom's black harness splinter,
And Summer move on Winter
With the trumpet of the March, and the pennon of the May ;
As gesture outstrips thought ;

So haply, toyer with ethereal strings,
Are thy blind repetitions of high things
The murmurous gnats whose aimless hoverings
    Reveal song's summer in the air;
The outstretched hand, which cannot thought declare,
    Yet is thought's harbinger.
These strains the way for thine own strains prepare;
We feel the music moist upon this breeze,
And hope the congregating poesies.
    Sundered yet by thee from us
    Wait, with wild eyes luminous,
All thy winged things that are to be;
They flit against thee, Gate of Ivory!
They clamour on the portress Destiny,—
'Set her wide, so we may issue through,
Our vans are quick for that they have to do!'
    Suffer still your young desire;
Your plumes but bicker at the tips with fire;
Tarry their kindling—they will beat the higher.
And thou, bright girl, not long shalt thou repeat
Idly the music from thy mother caught;
    Not vainly has she wrought,
Not vainly from the cloudward-jetting turret
Of her aërial mind for thy weak feet
Let down the silken ladder of her thought.
  She bare thee with a double pain,
    Of the body and the spirit;
  Thou thy fleshly weeds hast ta'en,
    Thy diviner weeds inherit!
The precious streams which through thy young lips roll
Shall leave their lovely delta in thy soul:

Where sprites of so essential kind
Set their paces,
Surely they shall leave behind
The green traces
Of their sportance in the mind ;
And thou shalt, ere we well may know it,
Turn that daintiness, a poet,—
Elfin-ring
Where sweet fancies foot and sing.
So it may be, so it *shall* be,—
Oh, take the prophecy from me !
What if the old fastidious sculptor, Time,
This crescent marvel of his hands
Carveth all too painfully,
And I who prophesy shall never see ?
What if the niche of its predestined rhyme,
Its aching niche, too long expectant stands ?
Yet shall he after sore delays
On some exultant day of days
The white enshrouding childhood raise
From thy fair spirit, finished for our gaze ;
While we (but 'mongst that happy 'we'
The prophet cannot be !)—
While we behold with no astonishments,
With that serene fulfilment of delight
Wherewith we view the sight
When the stars pitch the golden tents
Of their high campment on the plains of night.
Why should amazement be our satellite ?
What wonder in such things ?
If angels have hereditary wings,

If not by Salic law is handed down
The poet's crown,
To thee, born in the purple of the throne,
The laurel must belong:
Thou, in thy mother's right
Descendant of Castalian-chrismèd kings—
O Princess of the Blood of Song!

Peace! Too impetuously have I been winging
Toward vaporous heights which beckon and beguile.
I sink back, saddened to my inmost mind;
Even as I list a-dream that mother singing
The poesy of sweet tone, and sadden while
Her voice is cast in troubled wake behind
The keel of her keen spirit. Thou art enshrined
In a too primal innocence for this eye—
Intent on such untempered radiancy—
Not to be pained; my clay can scarce endure
Ungrieved the effluence near of essences so pure.
Therefore, little tender maiden,
Never be thou overshaden
With a mind whose canopy
Would shut out the sky from thee;
Whose tangled branches intercept Heaven's light:
I will not feed my unpastured heart
On thee, green pleasaunce as thou art,
To lessen by one flower thy happy daisies white.
The water-rat is earth-hued like the runlet
Whereon he swims; and how in me should lurk
Thoughts apt to neighbour thine, thou creature sunlit?
If through long fret and irk

Thine eyes within their browed recesses were
Worn caves where thought lay couchant in its lair ;
Wert thou a spark among dank leaves, ah ruth !
With age in all thy veins, while all thy heart was youth ;
Our contact might run smooth.
But life's Eoan dews still moist thy ringèd hair ;
Dian's chill finger-tips
Thaw if at night they happen on thy lips ;
The flying fringes of the sun's cloak frush
The fragile leaves which on those warm lips blush ;
And joy only lurks retirèd
In the dim gloaming of thine irid.
Then since my love drags this poor shadow, me,
And one without the other may not be,
From both I guard thee free.
It still is much, yes, it is much,
Only—my dream !—to love my love of thee ;
And it is much, yes, it is much,
In hands which thou hast touched to feel thy touch,
In voices which have mingled with thine own
To hear a double tone.
As anguish, for supreme expression prest,
Borrows its saddest tongue from jest,
Thou hast of absence so create
A presence more importunate ;
And thy voice pleads its sweetest suit
When it is mute.
I thank the once accursèd star
Which did me teach
To make of Silence my familiar,
Who hath the rich reversion of thy speech,

Since the most charming sounds thy thought can wear,
Cast off, fall to that pale attendant's share;
And thank the gift which made my mind
A shadow-world, wherethrough the shadows wind
Of all the loved and lovely of my kind.

Like a maiden Saxon, folden,
As she flits, in moon-drenched mist;
Whose curls streaming flaxen-golden,
By the misted moonbeams kist,
Dispread their filmy floating silk
Like honey steeped in milk:
So, vague goldenness remote,
Through my thoughts I watch thee float.
When the snake summer casts her blazoned skin
We find it at the turn of autumn's path,
And think it summer that rewinded hath,
Joying therein;
And this enamouring slough of thee, mine elf,
I take it for thyself;
Content. Content? Yea, title it content.
The very loves that belt thee must prevent
My love, I know, with their legitimacy:
As the metallic vapours, that are swept
Athwart the sun, in his light intercept
The very hues
Which their conflagrant elements effuse.
But, my love, my heart, my fair,
That only I should see thee rare,
Or tent to the hid core thy rarity,—
This were a mournfulness more piercing far

Than that those other loves my own must bar,
Or thine for others leave thee none for me.

But on a day whereof I think,
One shall dip his hand to drink
In that still water of thy soul,
And its imaged tremors race
Over thy joy-troubled face,
As the intervolved reflections roll
From a shaken fountain's brink,
With swift light wrinkling its alcove.
From the hovering wing of Love
The warm stain shall flit roseal on thy cheek.
Then, sweet blushet ! whenas he,
The destined paramount of thy universe,
Who has no worlds to sigh for, ruling thee,
Ascends his vermeil throne of empery,
One grace alone I seek.
Oh ! may this treasure-galleon of my verse,
Fraught with its golden passion, oared with cadent rhyme,
Set with a towering press of fantasies,
Drop safely down the time,
Leaving mine islèd self behind it far
Soon to be sunken in the abysm of seas
(As down the years the splendour voyages
From some long ruined and night-submergèd star),
And in thy subject sovereign's havening heart
Anchor the freightage of its virgin ore ;
Adding its wasteful more
To his own overflowing treasury.

So through his river mine shall reach thy sea,
Bearing its confluent part;
In his pulse mine shall thrill;
And the quick heart shall quicken from the heart that's still.

Ah, help, my Dæmon that hast served me well!
Not at this last, oh, do not me disgrace!
I faint, I sicken, darkens all my sight,
As, poised upon this unprevisioned height,
I lift into its place
The utmost aery traceried pinnacle.
So; it is builded, the high tenement,
—God grant!—to mine intent:
Most like a palace of the Occident,
Up-thrusting, toppling maze on maze,
Its mounded blaze,
And washèd by the sunset's rosy waves,
Whose sea drinks rarer hue from those rare walls it laves.
Yet wail, my spirits, wail!
So few therein to enter shall prevail.
Scarce fewer could win way, if their desire
A dragon baulked, with involuted spire,
And writhen snout spattered with yeasty fire.
For at the elfin portal hangs a horn
Which none can wind aright
Save the appointed knight
Whose lids the fay-wings brushed when he was born.
All others stray forlorn,
Or glimpsing, through the blazoned windows scrolled,

Receding labyrinths lessening tortuously
In half obscurity;
With mystic images, inhuman, cold,
That flameless torches hold.
But who can wind that horn of might
(The horn of dead Heliades) aright,—
Straight
Open for him shall roll the conscious gate;
And light leap up from all the torches there,
And life leap up in every torchbearer,
And the stone faces kindle in the glow,
And into the blank eyes the irids grow,
And through the dawning irids ambushed meanings show.
Illumined this wise on,
He threads securely the far intricacies,
With brede from Heaven's wrought vesture overstrewn;
Swift Tellus' purfled tunic, girt upon
With the blown chlamys of her fluttering seas;
And the freaked kirtle of the pearlèd moon:
Until he gain the structure's core, where stands—
A toil of magic hands—
The unbodied spirit of the sorcerer,
Most strangely rare,
As is a vision remembered in the noon;
Unbodied, yet to mortal seeing clear,
Like sighs exhaled in eager atmosphere.
From human haps and mutabilities
It rests exempt, beneath the edifice
To which itself gave rise;

Sustaining centre to the bubble of stone
Which, breathed from it, exists by it alone.
Yea, ere Saturnian earth her child consumes,
And I lie down with outworn ossuaries,
Ere death's grim tongue anticipates the tomb's
Siste viator, in this storied urn
My living heart is laid to throb and burn,
Till end be ended, and till ceasing cease.

And thou by whom this strain hath parentage;
Wantoner between the yet untreacherous claws
Of newly-whelped existence! ere he pause,
What gift to thee can yield the archimage?
For coming seasons' frets
What aids, what amulets,
What softenings, or what brightenings?
As Thunder writhes the lash of his long lightnings
About the growling heads of the brute main
Foaming at mouth, until it wallow again
In the scooped oozes of its bed of pain;
So all the gnashing jaws, the leaping heads
Of hungry menaces, and of ravening dreads,
Of pangs
Twitch-lipped, with quivering nostrils and immitigate fangs,
I scourge beneath the torment of my charms
That their repentless nature fear to work thee harms.
And as yon Apollonian harp-player,
Yon wandering psalterist of the sky,
With flickering strings which scatter melody,
The silver-stolèd damsels of the sea,

Or lake, or fount, or stream,
Enchants from their ancestral heaven of waters
To Naiad it through the unfrothing air;
My song enchants so out of undulous dream
The glimmering shapes of its dim-tressèd
daughters,
And missions each to be thy minister,
Saying: 'O ye,
The organ-stops of being's harmony;
The blushes on existence's pale face,
Lending it sudden grace;
Without whom we should but guess Heaven's worth
By blank negations of this sordid earth
(So haply to the blind may light
Be but gloom's undetermined opposite);
Ye who are thus as the refracting air
Whereby we see Heaven's sun before it rise
Above the dull line of our mortal skies;
As breathing on the strainèd ear that sighs
From comrades viewless unto strainèd eyes,
Soothing our terrors in the lampless night;
Ye who can make this world, where all is deeming,
What world ye list, being arbiters of seeming;
Attend upon her ways, benignant powers!
Unroll ye life a carpet for her feet,
And cast ye down before them blossomy hours,
Until her going shall be clogged with sweet!
All dear emotions whose new-bathèd hair,
Still streaming from the soul, in love's warm air
Smokes with a mist of tender fantasies;
All these,

And all the heart's wild growths which, swiftly bright,
Spring up the crimson agarics of a night,
No pain in withering, yet a joy arisen ;
And all thin shapes more exquisitely rare,
More subtly fair,
Than these weak ministering words have spell to prison
Within the magic circle of this rhyme ;
And all the fays who in our creedless clime
Have sadly ceased,
Bearing to other children childhood's proper feast ;
Whose robes are fluent crystal, crocus-hued,
Whose wings are wind a-fire, whose mantles
wrought
From spray that falling rainbows shake to air ;
These, ye familiars to my wizard thought,
Make things of journal custom unto her ;
With lucent feet imbrued,
If young Day tread, a glorious vintager,
The wine-press of the purple-foamèd east ;
Or round the nodding sun, flush-faced and sunken,
His wild Bacchantes drunken
Reel, with rent woofs a-flaunt, their westering rout.'

—But lo ! at length the day is lingered out,
At length my Ariel lays his viol by ;
We sing no more to thee, child, he and I ;
The day is lingered out :
In slow wreaths folden
Around yon censer, spherèd, golden,
Vague Vesper's fumes aspire ;
And, glimmering to eclipse,

The long laburnum drips
Its honey of wild flame, its jocund spilth of fire.

Now pass your ways, fair bird, and pass your ways,
If you will ;
I have you through the days !
And flit or hold you still,
And perch you where you list
On what wrist,—
You are mine through the times !
I have caught you fast for ever in a tangle of sweet rhymes.
And in your young maiden morn
You may scorn,
But you must be
Bound and sociate to me ;
With this thread from out the tomb my dead hand shall tether thee !

Go, Sister-songs, to that sweet Sister-pair
For whom I have your frail limbs fashionèd,
And framèd feateously ;—
For whom I have your frail limbs fashionèd
With how great shamefastness and how great dread,
Knowing you frail, but not if you be fair,
Though framèd feateously ;
Go unto them from me.
Go from my shadow to their sunshine sight,
Made for all sights' delight ;
Go like twin swans that oar the surgy storms
To bate with pennoned snows in candent air :

Nigh with abasèd head,
Yourselves linked sisterly, that Sister-pair,
And go in presence there;
Saying—'Your young eyes cannot see our forms,
Nor read the yearning of our looks aright;
But Time shall trail the veilings from our hair,
And cleanse your seeing with his euphrasy
(Yea, even your bright seeing make more bright,
Which is all sights' delight),
And ye shall know us for what things we be.

'Whilom, within a poet's calyxed heart,
A dewy love we trembled all apart;
Whence it took rise
Beneath your radiant eyes,
Which misted it to music. We must long,
A floating haze of silver subtile song,
Await love-laden
Above each maiden
The appointed hour that o'er the hearts of you—
As vapours into dew
Unweave, whence they were wove,—
Shall turn our loosening musics back to love.'

INSCRIPTION

WHEN the last stir of bubbling melodies
Broke, as my chants sank underneath the wave
Of dulcitude, but sank again to rise
Where man's embaying mind those waters lave
(For music hath its Oceanides
Flexuously floating through their parent seas,
And such are these),
I saw a vision—or may it be
The effluence of a dear desired reality ?
I saw two spirits high,—
Two spirits, dim within the silver smoke
Which is for ever woke
By snowing lights of fountained Poesy.
Two shapes they were, familiar as love ;
They were those souls, whereof
One twines from finest gracious daily things,
Strong, constant, noticeless, as are heart-strings,
The golden cage wherein this song-bird sings ;
And the other's sun gives hue to all my flowers,
Which else pale flowers of Tartarus would grow,
Where ghosts watch ghosts of blooms in ghostly bowers ;—
For we do know
The hidden player by his harmonies,
And by my thoughts I know what still hands thrill the keys.

And to these twain—as from the mind's abysses
All thoughts draw toward the awakening heart's sweet kisses,
With proffer of their wreathen fantasies,—
Even so to these

I saw how many brought their garlands fair,
Whether of song, or simple love, they were,—
Of simple love, that makes best garlands fair.
But one I marked who lingered still behind,
As for such souls no seemly gift had he :
    He was not of their strain,
Nor worthy of so bright beings to entertain,
Nor fit compeer for such high company.
Yet was he, surely, born to them in mind,
Their youngest nursling of the spirit's kind.
    Last stole this one,
With timid glance, of watching eyes adread,
And dropped his frightened flower when all were gone ;
And where the frail flower fell, it witherèd.
But yet methought those high souls smiled thereon ;
As when a child, upstraining at your knees
Some fond and fancied nothings, says, 'I give you
    these!'

LOVE IN DIAN'S LAP

PROEMION

HEAR, my Muses, I demand
A little labour at your hand,
Ere quite is loosed our amity :
A little husband out the sand
That times the gasps of Poesy !

O belovèd, O ye Two,
When the Years last met, to you
I sent a gift exultingly.
My song's sands, like the Year's, are few ;
But take this last weak gift from me.

One year ago (one year, one year !)
I had no prescience, no, nor fear ;
I said to Oblivion : ' Dread thou me ! '
What cared I for the mortal year ?
I was not of its company.

Before mine own Elect stood I,
And said to Death :' Not these shall die ! '
I issued mandate royally.
I bade Decay : ' Avoid and fly,
For I am fatal unto thee.'

LOVE IN DIAN'S LAP

I sprinkled a few drops of verse,
And said to Ruin : ' Quit thy hearse ; '
To my Loved : ' Pale not, come with me ;
I will escort thee down the years,
With me thou walk'st immortally.'

Rhyme did I as a charmed cup give,
That who I would might drink and live.
' Enter,' I cried, ' Song's ark with me ! '
And knew not that a witch's sieve
Were built somewhat more seamanly.

I said unto my heart : ' Be light !
Thy grain will soon for long delight
Oppress the future's granary : '
Poor fool ! and did not hear—' This night
They shall demand thy song of thee.'

Of God and you I pardon crave ;
Who would save others, nor can save
My own self from mortality :
I throw my whole songs in the grave—
They will not fill that pit for me.

But thou, to whom I sing this last—
The bitterest bitterness I taste
Is that thy children have from me
The best I had where all is waste,
And but the crumbs were cast to thee.

PROEMION

It may be I did little wrong ;
Since no notes of thy lyre belong
To them ; thou leftest them for me ;
And what didst *thou* want of my song,—
Thou, thine own immortality ?

Ah, I would that I had yet
Given thy head one coronet
With thine ivies to agree !
Ere thou restest where are set
Wreaths but on the breast of thee.

Though what avails ?—The ivies twined
By thine own hand thou must unbind,
When there thy temples laid shall be :
'Tis haply Death's prevision kind
That ungirt brows lie easily.

' *Of all thy trees thou lovest so,*
None with thee to grave shall go,
Save the abhorrèd cypress tree.'*
The abhorrèd ?—Ah, I know, I know,
Thy dearest follower it would be !

Thou would'st sweetly lie in death
The dark southerner beneath :
We should interpret, knowing thee,—
' Here I rest ' (her symbol saith),
' And above me, Italy.'

* The words of Horace.

But above thy English grave
Who knows if a tree shall wave ?
  Save—when the far certainty
Of thy fame fulfilled is—save
  The laurel that shall spring from thee.

Very little carest thou
If the world no laurel-bough
  Set in thy dead hand, ah me !
But *my* heart to grieve allow
  For the fame thou shalt not see !

Yet my heart to grieve allow,
With the grief that grieves it now,
  Looking to futurity,
With too sure presaging how
  Fools will blind blind eyes from thee :—

Bitterly presaging how
Sightless death must them endow
  With sight, who gladder blind would be.
'Though our eyes be blind enow,
  Let us hide them, lest we see ! '

I would their hearts but hardened were
In the way that I aver
  All men shall find this heart of me :
Which is so hard, thy name cut there
  Never worn or blurred can be.

PROEMION

If my song as much might say!
But in all too late a day
I use thy name for melody;
And with the sweet theme assay
To hide my descant's poverty.

When that last song gave I you,
Ye and I, beloved Two,
Were each to each half mystery!
Now the tender veil is through;
Unafraid the whole we see.

Small for you the danger was!
Statued deity but thaws
In you to warm divinity;
Some fair defect completion flaws
With a completing grace to me.

But when *I* my veiling raised—
The Milonian less were crazed
To talk with men incarnately:
The poor goddess but appraised
By her lacking arms would be.

Though Pan may have delicious throat,
'Tis hard to tolerate the goat.
What if Pan were suddenly
To lose his singing, every note?—
Then pity have of Pan, and me!

LOVE IN DIAN'S LAP

Love and Song together sing ;
Song is weak and fain to cling
  About Love's shoulder wearily.
Let her voice, poor fainting thing,
  In his strong voice drownèd be !

In my soul's Temple seems a sound
Of unfolding wings around
  The vacant shrine of poesy :
Voices of parting songs resound :—
  ' Let us go hence ! ' *A space let be !*

A space, my Muses,—I demand
This last of labours at your hand,
  Ere quite is loosed our amity :
A little stay the cruel sand
  That times the gasps of Poesy !

I

BEFORE HER PORTRAIT IN YOUTH

AS lovers, banished from their lady's face,
And hopeless of her grace,
Fashion a ghostly sweetness in its place,
Fondly adore
Some stealth-won cast attire she wore,
A kerchief, or a glove:
And at the lover's beck
Into the glove there fleets the hand,
Or at impetuous command
Up from the kerchief floats the virgin neck:
So I, in very lowlihead of love,—
Too shyly reverencing
To let one thought's light footfall smooth
Tread near the living, consecrated thing,—
Treasure me thy cast youth.
This outworn vesture, tenantless of thee,
Hath yet my knee,
For that, with show and semblance fair
Of the past Her
Who once the beautiful, discarded raiment bare,
It cheateth me.
As gale to gale drifts breath
Of blossoms' death,
So, dropping down the years from hour to hour,
This dead youth's scent is wafted me to-day:
I sit, and from the fragrance dream the flower.

So, then, she looked (I say);
And so her front sank down
Heavy beneath the poet's iron crown:
On her mouth museful sweet
(Even as the twin lips meet)
Did thought and sadness greet:
Sighs
In those mournful eyes
So put on visibilities;
As viewless ether turns, in deep on deep, to dyes.
Thus, long ago,
She kept her meditative paces slow
Through maiden meads, with wavèd shadow and gleam
Of locks half-lifted on the winds of dream,
Till Love up-caught her to his chariot's glow.
Yet, voluntary, happier Proserpine!
This drooping flower of youth thou lettest fall
I, faring in the cockshut-light, astray,
Find on my 'lated way,
And stoop, and gather for memorial,
And lay it on my bosom, and make it mine.
To this, the all of love the stars allow me,
I dedicate and vow me.
I reach back through the days
A trothed hand to the dead the last trump shall not raise.
The water-wraith that cries
From those eternal sorrows of thy pictured eyes
Entwines and draws me down their soundless intricacies.

II

TO A POET BREAKING SILENCE

TOO wearily had we and song
Been left to look and left to long,
Yea, song and we to long and look,
Since thine acquainted feet forsook
The mountain where the Muses hymn
For Sinai and the Seraphim.
Now in both the mountains' shine
Dress thy countenance, twice divine!
From Moses and the Muses draw
The Tables of thy double Law!
His rod-born fount and Castaly
Let the one rock bring forth for thee,
Renewing so from either spring
The songs which both thy countries sing:
Or we shall fear lest, heavened thus long,
Thou should'st forget thy native song,
And mar thy mortal melodies
With broken stammer of the skies.

Ah! let the sweet birds of the Lord
With earth's waters make accord;
Teach how the crucifix may be
Carven from the laurel-tree,
Fruit of the Hesperides
Burnish take on Eden-trees,
The Muses' sacred grove be wet
With the red dew of Olivet,

And Sappho lay her burning brows
In white Cecilia's lap of snows!

Thy childhood must have felt the stings
Of too divine o'ershadowings;
Its odorous heart have been a blossom
That in darkness did unbosom,
Those fire-flies of God to invite,
Burning spirits, which by night
Bear upon their laden wing
To such hearts impregnating.
For flowers that night-wings fertilize
Mock down the stars' unsteady eyes,
And with a happy, sleepless glance
Gaze the moon out of countenance.
I think thy girlhood's watchers must
Have took thy folded songs on trust,
And felt them, as one feels the stir
Of still lightnings in the hair,
When conscious hush expects the cloud
To speak the golden secret loud
Which tacit air is privy to;
Flasked in the grape the wine they knew,
Ere thy poet-mouth was able
For its first young starry babble.
Keep'st thou not yet that subtle grace?
Yea, in this silent interspace,
God sets His poems in thy face!

The loom which mortal verse affords,
Out of weak and mortal words,

TO A POET BREAKING SILENCE

Wovest thou thy singing-weed in,
To a rune of thy far Eden.
Vain are all disguises! Ah,
Heavenly *incognita!*
Thy mien bewrayeth through that wrong
The great Uranian House of Song!
As the vintages of earth
Taste of the sun that riped their birth,
We know what never-cadent Sun
Thy lampèd clusters throbbed upon,
What plumèd feet the winepress trod;
Thy wine is flavorous of God.
Whatever singing-robe thou wear
Has the Paradisal air;
And some gold feather it has kept
Shows what Floor it lately swept!

III

"MANUS ANIMAM PINXIT"

LADY who hold'st on me dominion!
Within your spirit's arms I stay me fast
Against the fell
Immitigate ravening of the gates of hell;
And claim my right in you, most hardly won,
Of chaste fidelity upon the chaste:
Hold me and hold by me, lest both should fall
(O in high escalade high companion!)
Even in the breach of Heaven's assaulted wall.
Like to a wind-sown sapling grow I from
The clift, Sweet, of your skyward-jetting soul,—
Shook by all gusts that sweep it, overcome
By all its clouds incumbent: O be true
To your soul, dearest, as my life to you!
For if that soil grow sterile, then the whole
Of me must shrivel, from the topmost shoot
Of climbing poesy, and my life, killed through,
Dry down and perish to the foodless root.

Sweet Summer! unto you this swallow drew,
By secret instincts inappeasable,
That did direct him well,
Lured from his gelid North which wrought him wrong,
Wintered of sunning song;—
By happy instincts inappeasable,
Ah yes! that led him well,
Lured to the untried regions and the new

Climes of auspicious you ;
To twitter there, and in his singing dwell.
But ah ! if you, my Summer, should grow waste,
With grieving skies o'ercast,
For such migration my poor wing was strong
But once ; it has no power to fare again
Forth o'er the heads of men,
Nor other Summers for its Sanctuary :
But from your mind's chilled sky
It needs must drop, and lie with stiffened wings
Among your soul's forlornest things ;
A speck upon your memory, alack !
A dead fly in a dusty window-crack.

O therefore you who are
What words, being to such mysteries
As raiment to the body is,
Should rather hide than tell ;
Chaste and intelligential love :
Whose form is as a grove
Hushed with the cooing of an unseen dove ;
Whose spirit to my touch thrills purer far
Than is the tingling of a silver bell ;
Whose body other ladies well might bear
As soul,—yea, which it profanation were
For all but you to take as fleshly woof,
Being spirit truest proof ;
Whose spirit sure is lineal to that
Which sang *Magnificat :*
Chastest, since such you are,
Take this curbed spirit of mine,

Which your own eyes invest with light divine,
For lofty love and high auxiliar
In daily exalt emprise
Which outsoars mortal eyes;
This soul which on your soul is laid,
As maid's breast against breast of maid;
Beholding how your own I have engraved
On it, and with what purging thoughts have laved
This love of mine from all mortality.
Indeed the copy is a painful one,
And with long labour done!
O if you doubt the thing you are, lady,
Come then, and look in me;
Your beauty, Dian, dress and contemplate
Within a pool to Dian consecrate!
Unveil this spirit, lady, when you will,
For unto all but you 'tis veilèd still:
Unveil, and fearless gaze there, you alone,
And if you love the image—'tis your own!

IV

A CARRIER SONG

I

SINCE you have waned from us,
Fairest of women!
I am a darkened cage
Song cannot hymn in.
My songs have followed you,
Like birds the summer;
Ah! bring them back to me,
Swiftly, dear comer!
Seraphim,
Her to hymn,
Might leave their portals;
And at my feet learn
The harping of mortals!

II

Where wings to rustle use,
But this poor tarrier—
Searching my spirit's eaves—
Find I for carrier.
Ah! bring them back to me
Swiftly, sweet comer—
Swift, swift, and bring with you
Song's Indian summer!
Seraphim,
Her to hymn,
Might leave their portals;
And at my feet learn
The harping of mortals!

III

Whereso your angel is,
My angel goeth;
I am left guardianless,
Paradise knoweth!
I have no Heaven left
To weep my wrongs to;
Heaven, when you went from us,
Went with my songs too.
Seraphim,
Her to hymn,
Might leave their portals;
And at my feet learn
The harping of mortals!

IV

I have no angels left
Now, Sweet, to pray to:
Where you have made your shrine
They are away to.
They have struck Heaven's tent,
And gone to cover you:
Whereso you keep your state
Heaven is pitched over you!
Seraphim,
Her to hymn,
Might leave their portals;
And at my feet learn
The harping of mortals!

v

She that is Heaven's Queen
  Her title borrows,
For that she, pitiful,
  Beareth our sorrows.
So thou, *Regina mî*,
  Spes infirmorum ;
With all our grieving crowned
  Mater dolorum !
    Seraphim,
    Her to hymn,
    Might leave their portals ;
    And at my feet learn
    The harping of mortals !

vi

Yet, envious coveter
  Of others' grieving !
This lonely longing yet
  'Scapeth your reaving.
Cruel, to take from a
  Sinner his Heaven !
Think you with contrite smiles
  To be forgiven ?
    Seraphim,
    Her to hymn,
    Might leave their portals ;
    And at my feet learn
    The harping of mortals !

VII

Penitent ! give me back
  Angels, and Heaven ;
Render your stolen self,
  And be forgiven !
How frontier Heaven from you ?
  For my soul prays, Sweet,
Still to your face in Heaven,
  Heaven in your face, Sweet !
    Seraphim,
    Her to hymn,
    Might leave their portals ;
    And at my feet learn
    The harping of mortals !

V

SCALA JACOBI PORTAQUE EBURNEA

HER soul from earth to Heaven lies,
Like the ladder of the vision,
Whereon go
To and fro,
In ascension and demission,
Star-flecked feet of Paradise.

Now she is drawn up from me,
All my angels, wet-eyed, tristful,
Gaze from great
Heaven's gate
Like pent children, very wistful,
That below a playmate see.

Dream-dispensing face of hers!
Ivory port which loosed upon me
Wings, I wist,
Whose amethyst
Trepidations have forgone me,—
Hesper's filmy traffickers!

VI

GILDED GOLD

THOU dost to rich attire a grace,
To let it deck itself with thee,
And teachest pomp strange cunning ways
To be thought simplicity.
But lilies, stolen from grassy mold,
No more curlèd state unfold
Translated to a vase of gold;
In burning throne though they keep still
Serenities unthawed and chill.
Therefore, albeit thou'rt stately so,
In statelier state thou us'dst to go.

Though jewels should phosphoric burn
Through those night-waters of thine hair,
A flower from its translucid urn
Poured silver flame more lunar-fair.
These futile trappings but recall
Degenerate worshippers who fall
In purfled kirtle and brocade
To 'parel the white Mother-Maid.
For, as her image stood arrayed
In vests of its self-substance wrought
To measure of the sculptor's thought—
Slurred by those added braveries;
So for thy spirit did devise
Its Maker seemly garniture,
Of its own essence parcel pure,—
From grave simplicities a dress,

And reticent demurenesses,
And love encinctured with reserve ;
Which the woven vesture should subserve.
For outward robes in their ostents
Should show the soul's habiliments.
Therefore I say,—Thou'rt fair even so,
But better Fair I use to know.

The violet would thy dusk hair deck
With graces like thine own unsought.
Ah ! but such place would daze and wreck
Its simple, lowly, rustic thought ;
For so advancèd, dear, to thee,
It would unlearn humility !
Yet do not, with an altered look,
In these weak numbers read rebuke ;
Which are but jealous lest too much
God's master-piece thou shouldst retouch.
Where a sweetness is complete,
Add not sweets unto the sweet !
Or, as thou wilt, for others so
In unfamiliar richness go ;
But keep for mine acquainted eyes
The fashions of thy Paradise.

VII

HER PORTRAIT

OH, but the heavenly grammar did I hold
Of that high speech which angels' tongues turn gold!
So should her deathless beauty take no wrong,
Praised in her own great kindred's fit and cognate tongue:
Or if that language yet with us abode
Which Adam in the garden talked with God!
But our untempered speech descends—poor heirs!
Grimy and rough-cast still from Babel's bricklayers:
Curse on the brutish jargon we inherit,
Strong but to damn, not memorize, a spirit!
A cheek, a lip, a limb, a bosom, they
Move with light ease in speech of working-day;
And women we do use to praise even so.
But here the gates we burst, and to the temple go.
Their praise were her dispraise: who dare, who dare,
Adulate the seraphim for their burning hair?
How, if with them I dared, here should I dare it?
How praise the woman, who but know the spirit?
How praise the colour of her eyes, uncaught
While they were coloured with her varying thought?
How her mouth's shape, who only use to know
What tender shape her speech will fit it to?
Or her lips' redness, when their joinèd veil
Song's fervid hand has parted till it wore them pale?

If I would praise her soul (temerarious if!),
All must be mystery and hieroglyph.

HER PORTRAIT

Heaven, which not oft is prodigal of its more
To singers, in their song too great before
(By which the hierarch of large poesy is
Restrained to his one sacred benefice),
Only for her the salutary awe
Relaxes and stern canon of its law;
To her alone concedes pluralities,
In her alone to reconcile agrees
The Muse, the Graces, and the Charities;
To her, who can the trust so well conduct,
To her it gives the use, to us the usufruct.

What of the dear administress then may
I utter, though I spoke her own carved perfect way?
What of her daily gracious converse known,
Whose heavenly despotism must needs dethrone
And subjugate all sweetness but its own?
Deep in my heart subsides the infrequent word,
And there dies slowly throbbing like a wounded bird.
What of her silence, that outsweetens speech?
What of her thoughts, high marks for mine own
thoughts to reach?
Yet, (Chaucer's antique sentence so to turn)
Most gladly will she teach, and gladly learn;
And teaching her, by her enchanting art,
The master threefold learns for all he can impart.
Now all is said, and all being said,—aye me!
There yet remains unsaid the very She.
Nay, to conclude (so to conclude I dare),
If of her virtues you evade the snare,
Then for her faults you'll fall in love with her.

Alas, and I have spoken of her Muse—
Her Muse, that died with her auroral dews!
Learn, the wise cherubim from harps of gold
Seduce a trepidating music manifold;
But the superior seraphim do know
None other music but to flame and glow.
So she first lighted on our frosty earth,
A sad musician, of cherubic birth,
Playing to alien ears—which did not prize
The uncomprehended music of the skies—
The exiled airs of her far Paradise.
But soon, from her own harpings taking fire,
In love and light her melodies expire.
Now Heaven affords her, for her silenced hymn,
A double portion of the seraphim.

At the rich odours from her heart that rise,
My soul remembers its lost Paradise,
And antenatal gales blow from Heaven's shores of spice;
I grow essential all, uncloaking me
From this encumbering virility,
And feel the primal sex of heaven and poetry:
And, parting from her, in me linger on
Vague snatches of Uranian antiphon.

How to the petty prison could she shrink
Of femineity?—Nay, but I think
In a dear courtesy her spirit would
Woman assume, for grace to womanhood.
Or, votaress to the virgin Sanctitude
Of reticent withdrawal's sweet, courted pale,

She took the cloistral flesh, the sexual veil,
Of her sad, aboriginal sisterhood ;
The habit of cloistral flesh which founding Eve indued.

Thus do I know her. But for what men call
Beauty—the loveliness corporeal,
Its most just praise a thing unproper were
To singer or to listener, me or her.
She wears that body but as one indues
A robe, half careless, for it is the use ;
Although her soul and it so fair agree,
We sure may, unattaint of heresy,
Conceit it might the soul's begetter be.
The immortal could we cease to contemplate,
The mortal part suggests its every trait.
God laid His fingers on the ivories
Of her pure members as on smoothèd keys,
And there out-breathed her spirit's harmonies.
I'll speak a little proudly :—I disdain
To count the beauty worth my wish or gain,
Which the dull daily fool can covet or obtain.
I do confess the fairness of the spoil,
But from such rivalry it takes a soil.
For her I'll proudlier speak :—how could it be
That I should praise the gilding on the psaltery ?
'Tis not for her to hold that prize a prize,
Or praise much praise, though proudest in its wise,
To which even hopes of merely women rise.
Such strife would to the vanquished laurels yield,
Against *her* suffered to have lost a field.
Herself must with herself be sole compeer,

Unless the people of her distant sphere
Some gold migration send to melodize the year.
But first our hearts must burn in larger guise,
To reformate the uncharitable skies,
And so the deathless plumage to acclimatize:
Since this, their sole congener in our clime,
Droops her sad, ruffled thoughts for half the shivering time.

Yet I have felt what terrors may consort
In women's cheeks, the Graces' soft resort;
My hand hath shook at gentle hands' access,
And trembled at the waving of a tress;
My blood known panic fear, and fled dismayed,
Where ladies' eyes have set their ambuscade;
The rustle of a robe hath been to me
The very rattle of love's musketry;
Although my heart hath beat the loud advance,
I have recoiled before a challenging glance,
Proved gay alarms where warlike ribbons dance.
And from it all, this knowledge have I got,—
The whole that others have, is less than they have not;
All which makes other women noted fair,
Unnoted would remain and overshone in her.

How should I gauge what beauty is her dole,
Who cannot see her countenance for her soul,
As birds see not the casement for the sky?
And, as 'tis check they prove its presence by,
I know not of her body till I find
My flight debarred the heaven of her mind.
Hers is the face whence all should copied be,

Did God make replicas of such as she ;
Its presence felt by what it does abate,
Because the soul shines through tempered and mitigate :
Where—as a figure labouring at night
Beside the body of a splendid light—
Dark Time works hidden by its luminousness ;
And every line he labours to impress
Turns added beauty, like the veins that run
Athwart a leaf which hangs against the sun.

There regent Melancholy wide controls ;
There Earth- and Heaven-Love play for aureoles ;
There Sweetness out of Sadness breaks at fits,
Like bubbles on dark water, or as flits
A sudden silver fin through its deep infinites ;
There amorous Thought has sucked pale Fancy's breath,
And Tenderness sits looking toward the lands of Death :
There Feeling stills her breathing with her hand,
And Dream from Melancholy part wrests the wand ;
And on this lady's heart, looked you so deep,
Poor Poetry has rocked himself to sleep :
Upon the heavy blossom of her lips
Hangs the bee Musing ; nigh her lids eclipse
Each half-occulted star beneath that lies ;
And, in the contemplation of those eyes,
Passionless passion, wild tranquillities.

EPILOGUE TO THE POET'S SITTER

Wherein he excuseth himself for the manner of the Portrait.

ALAS! now wilt thou chide, and say (I deem)
My figured descant hides the simple theme:
Or, in another wise reproving, say
I ill observe thine own high reticent way.
Oh, pardon, that I testify of thee
What thou couldst never speak, nor others be!

Yet (for the book is not more innocent
Of what the gazer's eyes makes so intent),
She will but smile, perhaps, that I find my fair
Sufficing scope in such strait theme as her.
'Bird of the sun! the stars' wild honey-bee!
Is your gold browsing done so thoroughly?
Or sinks a singèd wing to narrow nest in me?'
(Thus she might say: for not this lowly vein
Out-deprecates her deprecating strain.)
Oh, you mistake, dear lady, quite; nor know
Ether was strict as you, its loftiness as low!

The heavens do not advance their majesty
Over their marge; beyond his empery
The ensigns of the wind are not unfurled,
His reign is hooped in by the pale o' the world.
'Tis not the continent, but the contained,
That pleasaunce makes or prison, loose or chained.
Too much alike or little captives me,
For all oppression is captivity.

EPILOGUE TO THE POET'S SITTER

What groweth to its height demands no higher;
The limit limits not, but the desire.
Our minds make their own Termini, nor call
The issuing circumscriptions great or small;
So high constructing Nature lessons to us all:
Who optics gives accommodate to see
Your countenance large as looks the sun to be,
And distant greatness less than near humanity.

We, therefore, with a sure instinctive mind,
An equal spaciousness of bondage find
In confines far or near, of air or our own kind.
Our looks and longings, which affront the stars,
Most richly bruised against their golden bars,
Delighted captives of their flaming spears,
Find a restraint restrainless which appears
As that is, and so simply natural,
In you;—the fair detention freedom call,
And overscroll with fancies the loved prison-wall.

Such sweet captivity, and only such,
In you, as in those golden bars, we touch!
Our gazes for sufficing limits know
The firmament above, your face below;
Our longings are contented with the skies,
Contented with the heaven, and your eyes.
My restless wings, that beat the whole world through,
Flag on the confines of the sun and you;
And find the human pale remoter of the two.

VIII

DOMUS TUA

A PERFECT woman—Thine be laud!
Her body is a Temple of God.
At Doom-bar dare I make avows:
I have loved the beauty of Thy house.

IX

IN HER PATHS

AND she has trod before me in these ways!
I think that she has left here heavenlier days;
And I do guess her passage, as the skies
Of holy Paradise
Turn deeply holier,
And, looking up with sudden new delight,
One knows a seraph-wing has passed in flight.

The air is purer for her breathing, sure!
And all the fields do wear
The beauty fallen from her;
The winds do brush me with her robe's allure.
'Tis she has taught the heavens to look sweet,
And they do but repeat
The heaven, heaven, heaven of her face!
The clouds have studied going from her grace!
The pools whose marges had forgot the tread
Of Naiad, disenchanted, fled,
A second time must mourn,
Bereaven and forlorn.

Ah, foolish pools and meads! You did not see
Essence of old, essential pure as she.
For this was even that Lady, and none other,
The man in me calls 'Love,' the child calls 'Mother.'

X

AFTER HER GOING

THE after-even ! Ah, did I walk,
Indeed, in her or even ?
For nothing of me or around
But absent She did leaven,
Felt in my body as its soul,
And in my soul its heaven.

' Ah me ! my very flesh turns soul,
Essenced,' I sighed, ' with bliss ! '
And the blackbird held his lutany,
All fragrant-through with bliss ;
And all things stilled were as a maid
Sweet with a single kiss.

For grief of perfect fairness, eve
Could nothing do but smile ;
The time was far too perfect fair,
Being but for a while ;
And ah, in me, too happy grief
Blinded herself with smile !

The sunset at its radiant heart
Had somewhat unconfest :
The bird was loath of speech, its song
Half-refluent on its breast,
And made melodious toyings with
A note or two at best.

AFTER HER GOING

And she was gone, my sole, my Fair,
  Ah, sole my Fair, was gone!
Methinks, throughout the world 'twere right
  I had been sad alone;
And yet, such sweet in all things' heart,
  And such sweet in my own!

XI

BENEATH A PHOTOGRAPH

PHŒBUS, who taught me art divine,
Here tried his hand where I did mine;
And his white fingers in this face
Set my Fair's sigh-suggesting grace.
O sweetness past profaning guess,
Grievous with its own exquisiteness!
Vesper-like face, its shadows bright
With meanings of sequestered light;
Drooped with shamefast sanctities
She purely fears eyes cannot miss,
Yet would blush to know she *is*.
Ah, who can view with passionless glance
This tear-compelling countenance?
He has cozened it to tell
Almost its own miracle.
Yet I, all-viewing though he be,
Methinks saw further here than he;
And, Master gay, I swear I drew
Something the better of the two!

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

I FLED Him, down the nights and down the days ;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years ;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind ; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped ;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
'All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.'

I pleaded, outlaw-wise,
By many a hearted casement, curtained red,
Trellised with intertwining charities ;
(For, though I knew His love Who followèd,
Yet was I sore adread
Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside.)
But, if one little casement parted wide,
The gust of His approach would clash it to :
Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pursue.
Across the margent of the world I fled,
And troubled the gold gateways of the stars,
Smiting for shelter on their clangèd bars ;

Fretted to dulcet jars
And silvern chatter the pale ports o' the moon.
I said to Dawn : Be sudden—to Eve : Be soon ;
With thy young skiey blossoms heap me over
From this tremendous Lover—
Float thy vague veil about me, lest He see !
I tempted all His servitors, but to find
My own betrayal in their constancy,
In faith to Him their fickleness to me,
Their traitorous trueness, and their loyal deceit.
To all swift things for swiftness did I sue ;
Clung to the whistling mane of every wind.
But whether they swept, smoothly fleet,
The long savannahs of the blue ;
Or whether, Thunder-driven,
They clanged his chariot 'thwart a heaven,
Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn o' their feet :—
Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.
Still with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following Feet,
And a Voice above their beat—
' Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me.'

I sought no more that after which I strayed
In face of man or maid ;
But still within the little children's eyes
Seems something, something that replies,
They at least are for me, surely for me !

I turned me to them very wistfully ;
But just as their young eyes grew sudden fair
With dawning answers there,
Their angel plucked them from me by the hair.
' Come then, ye other children, Nature's—share
With me ' (said I) ' your delicate fellowship ;
Let me greet you lip to lip,
Let me twine with you caresses,
Wantoning
With our Lady-Mother's vagrant tresses,
Banqueting
With her in her wind-walled palace,
Underneath her azured daïs,
Quaffing, as your taintless way is,
From a chalice
Lucent-weeping out of the dayspring.'
So it was done :
I in their delicate fellowship was one—
Drew the bolt of Nature's secrecies.
I knew all the swift importings
On the wilful face of skies ;
I knew how the clouds arise
Spumèd of the wild sea-snortings ;
All that's born or dies
Rose and drooped with ; made them shapers
Of mine own moods, or wailful or divine ;
With them joyed and was bereaven.
I was heavy with the even,
When she lit her glimmering tapers
Round the day's dead sanctities.
I laughed in the morning's eyes.

I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,
Heaven and I wept together,
And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine;
Against the red throb of its sunset-heart
I laid my own to beat,
And share commingling heat;
But not by that, by that, was eased my human smart.
In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's grey cheek.
For ah! we know not what each other says,
These things and I; in sound *I* speak—
Their sound is but their stir, they speak by silences.
Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth;
Let her, if she would owe me,
Drop yon blue bosom-veil of sky, and show me
The breasts o' her tenderness:
Never did any milk of hers once bless
My thirsting mouth.
Nigh and nigh draws the chase,
With unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy;
And past those noisèd Feet
A voice comes yet more fleet—
'Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st
not Me.'

Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke!
My harness piece by piece Thou hast hewn from me,
And smitten me to my knee;
I am defenceless utterly.
I slept, methinks, and woke,
And, slowly gazing, find me stripped in sleep.

In the rash lustihead of my young powers,
I shook the pillaring hours
And pulled my life upon me ; grimed with smears,
I stand amid the dust o' the mounded years—
My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap.
My days have crackled and gone up in smoke,
Have puffed and burst as sun-starts on a stream.
Yea, faileth now even dream
The dreamer, and the lute the lutanist ;
Even the linked fantasies, in whose blossomy twist
I swung the earth a trinket at my wrist,
Are yielding ; cords of all too weak account
For earth with heavy griefs so overplussed.
Ah ! is Thy love indeed
A weed, albeit an amaranthine weed,
Suffering no flowers except its own to mount ?
Ah ! must—
Designer infinite !—
Ah ! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn
with it ?
My freshness spent its wavering shower i' the dust ;
And now my heart is as a broken fount,
Wherein tear-drippings stagnate, spilt down ever
From the dank thoughts that shiver
Upon the sighful branches of my mind.
Such is ; what is to be ?
The pulp so bitter, how shall taste the rind ?
I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds ;
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity ;
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then

Round the half-glimpsèd turrets slowly wash again.
But not ere him who summoneth
I first have seen, enwound
With glooming robes purpureal, cypress-crowned;
His name I know, and what his trumpet saith.
Whether man's heart or life it be which yields
Thee harvest, must Thy harvest-fields
Be dunged with rotten death?

Now of that long pursuit
Comes on at hand the bruit;
That Voice is round me like a bursting sea:
'And is thy earth so marred,
Shattered in shard on shard?
Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest Me!
Strange, piteous, futile thing!
Wherefore should any set thee love apart?
Seeing none but I makes much of naught' (He said),
'And human love needs human meriting:
How hast thou merited—
Of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot?
Alack, thou knowest not
How little worthy of any love thou art!
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee,
Save Me, save only Me?
All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!'

Halts by me that footfall :
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly ?
'Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekest !
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me.'

ODE TO THE SETTING SUN

ODE TO THE SETTING SUN

PRELUDE

THE wailful sweetness of the violin
Floats down the hushèd waters of the wind,
The heart-strings of the throbbing harp begin
To long in aching music. Spirit-pined,

In wafts that poignant sweetness drifts, until
The wounded soul ooze sadness. The red sun,
A bubble of fire, drops slowly toward the hill,
While one bird prattles that the day is done.

O setting Sun, that as in reverent days
Sinkest in music to thy smoothèd sleep,
Discrowned of homage, though yet crowned with rays,
Hymned not at harvest more, though reapers reap:

For thee this music wakes not. O deceived,
If thou hear in these thoughtless harmonies
A pious phantom of adorings reaved,
And echo of fair ancient flatteries!

Yet, in this field where the Cross planted reigns,
I know not what strange passion bows my head
To thee, whose great command upon my veins
Proves thee a god for me not dead, not dead!

For worship it is too incredulous,
  For doubt—oh, too believing-passionate!
What wild divinity makes my heart thus
  A fount of most baptismal tears?—Thy straight

Long beam lies steady on the Cross. Ah me!
  What secret would thy radiant finger show?
Of thy bright mastership is this the key?
  Is *this* thy secret, then? And is it woe?

Fling from thine ear the burning curls, and hark
  A song thou hast not heard in Northern day;
For Rome too daring, and for Greece too dark,
  Sweet with wild wings that pass, that pass away!

ODE

ALPHA and Omega, sadness and mirth,
  The springing music, and its wasting breath—
  The fairest things in life are Death and Birth,
  And of these two the fairer thing is Death.
Mystical twins of Time inseparable,
  The younger hath the holier array,
    And hath the awfuller sway:
  It is the falling star that trails the light,
  It is the breaking wave that hath the might,
The passing shower that rainbows maniple.
  Is it not so, O thou down-stricken Day,
That draw'st thy splendours round thee in thy fall?
High was thine Eastern pomp inaugural;

But thou dost set in statelier pageantry,
  Lauded with tumults of a firmament :
Thy visible music-blasts make deaf the sky,
  Thy cymbals clang to fire the Occident,
Thou dost thy dying so triumphally :
I *see* the crimson blaring of thy shawms !
    Why do those lucent palms
Strew thy feet's failing thicklier than their might,
Who dost but hood thy glorious eyes with night,
And vex the heels of all the yesterdays ?
    Lo ! this loud, lackeying praise
Will stay behind to greet the usurping moon,
  When they have cloud-barred over thee the West.
Oh, shake the bright dust from thy parting shoon !
  The earth not pæans thee, nor serves thy hest ;
Be godded not by Heaven ! avert thy face,
    And leave to blank disgrace
The oblivious world ! unsceptre thee of state and place !

Ha ! but bethink thee what thou gazedst on,
  Ere yet the snake Decay had venomed tooth ;
The name thou bar'st in those vast seasons gone—
    Candid Hyperion,
  Clad in the light of thine immortal youth !
    Ere Dionysus bled thy vines,
Or Artemis drave her clamours through the wood,
    Thou saw'st how once against Olympus' height
      The brawny Titans stood,
And shook the gods' world 'bout their ears, and how
Enceladus (whom Etna cumbers now)
  Shouldered me Pelion with its swinging pines,

The river unrecked, that did its broken flood
Spurt on his back : before the mountainous shock
The rankèd gods dislock,
Scared to their skies ; wide o'er rout-trampled night
Flew spurned the pebbled stars : those splendours then
Had tempested on earth, star upon star
Mounded in ruin, if a longer war
Had quaked Olympus and cold-fearing men.
Then did the ample marge
And circuit of thy targe
Sullenly redden all the vaward fight,
Above the blusterous clash
Wheeled thy swung falchion's flash,
And hewed their forces into splintered flight.

Yet ere Olympus thou wast, and a god !
Though we deny thy nod,
We cannot spoil thee of thy divinity.
What know we elder than thee ?
When thou didst, bursting from the great void's husk,
Leap like a lion on the throat o' the dusk ;
When the angels rose-chapleted
Sang each to other,
The vaulted blaze overhead
Of their vast pinions spread,
Hailing thee brother ;
How chaos rolled back from the wonder,
And the First Morn knelt down to thy visage of thunder !
Thou didst draw to thy side
Thy young Auroral bride,

And lift her veil of night and mystery ;
Tellus with baby hands
Shook off her swaddling-bands,
And from the unswathèd vapours laughed to thee.

Thou twi-form deity, nurse at once and sire !
Thou genitor that all things nourishest !
The earth was suckled at thy shining breast,
And in her veins is quick thy milky fire.
Who scarfed her with the morning ? and who set
Upon her brow the day-fall's carcanet ?
Who queened her front with the enrondured moon ?
Who dug night's jewels from their vaulty mine
To dower her, past an eastern wizard's dreams,
When, hovering on him through his haschish-swoon,
All the rained gems of the old Tartarian line
Shiver in lustrous throbbings of tinged flame ?
Whereof a moiety in the Paolis' seams
Statelily builded their Venetian name.
Thou hast enwoofèd her
An empress of the air,
And all her births are propertied by thee :
Her teeming centuries
Drew being from thine eyes :
Thou fatt'st the marrow of all quality.

Who lit the furnace of the mammoth's heart ?
Who shagged him like Pilatus' ribbèd flanks ?
Who raised the columned ranks
Of that old pre-diluvian forestry,
Which like a continent torn oppressed the sea,

When the ancient heavens did in rains depart,
While the high-dancèd whirls
Of the tossed scud made hiss thy drenchèd curls ?
Thou rear'dst the enormous brood ;
Who hast with life imbued
The lion maned in tawny majesty,
The tiger velvet-barred,
The stealthy-stepping pard,
And the lithe panther's flexuous symmetry.

How came the entombèd tree a light-bearer,
Though sunk in lightless lair ?
Friend of the forgers of earth,
Mate of the earthquake and thunders volcanic,
Clasped in the arms of the forces Titanic
Which rock like a cradle the girth
Of the ether-hung world ;
Swart son of the swarthy mine,
When flame on the breath of his nostrils feeds
How is his countenance half-divine,
Like thee in thy sanguine weeds ?
Thou gavest him his light,
Though sepultured in night
Beneath the dead bones of a perished world ;
Over his prostrate form
Though cold, and heat, and storm,
The mountainous wrack of a creation hurled.

Who made the splendid rose
Saturate with purple glows ;
Cupped to the marge with beauty ; a perfume-press

Whence the wind vintages
Gushes of warmèd fragrance richer far
Than all the flavorous ooze of Cyprus' vats ?
Lo, in yon gale which waves her green cymar,
With dusky cheeks burnt red
She sways her heavy head,
Drunk with the must of her own odorousness ;
While in a moted trouble the vexed gnats
Maze, and vibrate, and tease the noontide hush.
Who girt dissolvèd lightnings in the grape ?
Summered the opal with an Irised flush ?
Is it not thou that dost the tulip drape,
And huest the daffodilly,
Yet who hast snowed the lily,
And her frail sister, whom the waters name,
Dost vestal-vesture 'mid the blaze of June,
Cold as the new-sprung girlhood of the moon
Ere Autumn's kiss sultry her cheek with flame ?
Thou sway'st thy sceptred beam
O'er all delight and dream,
Beauty is beautiful but in thy glance :
And like a jocund maid
In garland-flowers arrayed,
Before thy ark Earth keeps her sacred dance.

And now, O shaken from thine antique throne,
And sunken from thy cœrule empery,
Now that the red glare of thy fall is blown
In smoke and flame about the windy sky,
Where are the wailing voices that should meet
From hill, stream, grove, and all of mortal shape

Who tread thy gifts, in vineyards as stray feet
Pulp the globed weight of juiced Iberia's grape ?
Where is the threne o' the sea ?
And why not dirges thee
The wind, that sings to himself as he makes stride
Lonely and terrible on the Andéan height ?
Where is the Naiad 'mid her sworded sedge ?
The Nymph wan-glimmering by her wan fount's verge ?
The Dryad at timid gaze by the wood-side ?
The Oread jutting light
On one up-strainèd sole from the rock-ledge ?
The Nereid tip-toe on the scud o' the surge,
With whistling tresses dank athwart her face,
And all her figure poised in lithe Circean grace ?
Why withers their lament ?
Their tresses tear-besprent,
Have they sighed hence with trailing garment-hem ?
O sweet, O sad, O fair,
I catch your flying hair,
Draw your eyes down to me, and dream on them !

A space, and they fleet from me. Must ye fade—
O old, essential candours, ye who made
The earth a living and a radiant thing—
And leave her corpse in our strained, cheated arms ?
Lo ever thus, when Song with chorded charms
Draws from dull death his lost Eurydice,
Lo ever thus, even at consummating,
Even in the swooning minute that claims her his,
Even as he trembles to the impassioned kiss

Of reincarnate Beauty, his control
Clasps the cold body, and forgoes the soul!
Whatso looks lovelily
Is but the rainbow on life's weeping rain.
Why have we longings of immortal pain,
And all we long for mortal? Woe is me,
And all our chants but chaplet some decay,
As mine this vanishing—nay, vanished Day.
The low sky-line dusks to a leaden hue,
No rift disturbs the heavy shade and chill,
Save one, where the charred firmament lets through
The scorching dazzle of Heaven; 'gainst which the hill,
Out-flattened sombrely,
Stands black as life against eternity.
Against eternity?
A rifting light in me
Burns through the leaden broodings of the mind:
O blessèd Sun, thy state
Uprisen or derogate
Dafts me no more with doubt; I seek and find.

If with exultant tread
Thou foot the Eastern sea,
Or like a golden bee
Sting the West to angry red,
Thou dost image, thou dost follow
That King-Maker of Creation,
Who, ere Hellas hailed Apollo,
Gave thee, angel-god, thy station;
Thou art of Him a type memorial.

ODE TO THE SETTING SUN

Like Him thou hang'st in dreadful pomp of blood
Upon thy Western rood;
And His stained brow did vail like thine to night,
Yet lift once more Its light,
And, risen, again departed from our ball,
But when It set on earth arose in Heaven.
Thus hath He unto death His beauty given:
And so of all which form inheriteth
The fall doth pass the rise in worth;
For birth hath in itself the germ of death,
But death hath in itself the germ of birth.
It is the falling acorn buds the tree,
The falling rain that bears the greenery,
The fern-plants moulder when the ferns arise.
For there is nothing lives but something dies,
And there is nothing dies but something lives.
Till skies be fugitives,
Till Time, the hidden root of change, updries,
Are Birth and Death inseparable on earth;
For they are twain yet one, and Death is Birth.

AFTER-STRAIN

NOW with wan ray that other sun of Song
Sets in the bleakening waters of my soul:
One step, and lo! the Cross stands gaunt and long
'Twixt me and yet bright skies, a presaged dole.

Even so, O Cross! thine is the victory.
Thy roots are fast within our fairest fields;

Brightness may emanate in Heaven from thee,
  Here thy dread symbol only shadow yields.

Of reapèd joys thou art the heavy sheaf
  Which must be lifted, though the reaper groan ;
Yea, we may cry till Heaven's great ear be deaf,
  But we must bear thee, and must bear alone.

Vain were a Simon ; of the Antipodes
  Our night not borrows the superfluous day.
Yet woe to him that from his burden flees,
  Crushed in the fall of what he cast away.

Therefore, O tender Lady, Queen Mary,
  Thou gentleness that dost enmoss and drape
The Cross's rigorous austerity,
  Wipe thou the blood from wounds that needs must
    gape.

' Lo, though suns rise and set, but crosses stay,
  I leave thee ever,' saith she, ' light of cheer.'
'Tis so : yon sky still thinks upon the Day,
  And showers aërial blossoms on his bier.

Yon cloud with wrinkled fire is edgèd sharp ;
  And once more welling through the air, ah me !
How the sweet viol plains him to the harp,
  Whose pangèd sobbings throng tumultuously.

Oh, this Medusa-pleasure with her stings !
  This essence of all suffering, which is joy !

I am not thankless for the spell it brings,
  Though tears must be told down for the charmed toy.

No ; while soul, sky, and music bleed together,
  Let me give thanks even for those griefs in me,
The restless windward stirrings of whose feather
  Prove them the brood of immortality.

My soul is quitted of death-neighbouring swoon,
  Who shall not slake her immitigable scars
Until she hear ' My sister ! ' from the moon,
  And take the kindred kisses of the stars.

TO THE DEAD CARDINAL OF WESTMINSTER

(*Henry Edward Manning : Died January* 1892)

TO THE DEAD CARDINAL OF WESTMINSTER

I WILL not perturbate
Thy Paradisal state
With praise
Of thy dead days;

To the new-heavened say,
'Spirit, thou wert fine clay':
This do,
Thy praise who knew.

Therefore my spirit clings
Heaven's porter by the wings,
And holds
Its gated golds

Apart, with thee to press
A private business;—
Whence,
Deign me audience.

Anchorite, who didst dwell
With all the world for cell,
My soul
Round me doth roll

A sequestration bare.
Too far alike we were,
Too far
Dissimilar.

For its burning fruitage I
Do climb the tree o' the sky;
Do prize
Some human eyes.

You smelt the Heaven-blossoms,
And all the sweet embosoms
The dear
Uranian year.

Those Eyes my weak gaze shuns,
Which to the suns are Suns,
Did
Not affray your lid.

The carpet was let down
(With golden moultings strown)
For you
Of the angels' blue.

But I, ex-Paradised,
The shoulder of your Christ
Find high
To lean thereby.

So flaps my helpless sail,
Bellying with neither gale,
Of Heaven
Nor Orcus even.

TO THE DEAD CARDINAL OF WESTMINSTER

Life is a coquetry
Of Death, which wearies me,
Too sure
Of the amour;

A tiring-room where I
Death's divers garments try,
Till fit
Some fashion sit.

It seemeth me too much
I do rehearse for such
A mean
And single scene.

The sandy glass hence bear—
Antique remembrancer:
My veins
Do spare its pains.

With secret sympathy
My thoughts repeat in me
Infirm
The turn o' the worm

Beneath my appointed sod;
The grave is in my blood;
I shake
To winds that take

Its grasses by the top;
The rains thereon that drop
Perturb
With drip acerb

My subtly answering soul;
The feet across its knoll
Do jar
Me from afar.

As sap foretastes the spring;
As Earth ere blossoming
Thrills
With far daffodils,

And feels her breast turn sweet
With the unconceivèd wheat;
So doth
My flesh foreloathe

The abhorrèd spring of Dis,
With seething presciences
Affirm
The preparate worm.

I have no thought that I,
When at the last I die,
Shall reach
To gain your speech.

But you, should that be so,
May very well, I know,
May well
To me in hell

With recognizing eyes
Look from your Paradise—
'God bless
Thy hopelessness!'

Call, holy soul, O call
The hosts angelical,
And say,—
'See, far away

'Lies one I saw on earth;
One stricken from his birth
With curse
Of destinate verse.

'What place doth He ye serve
For such sad spirit reserve,—
Given,
In dark lieu of Heaven,

'The impitiable Dæmon,
Beauty, to adore and dream on,
To be
Perpetually

'Hers, but she never his?
He reapeth miseries;
Foreknows
His wages woes;

'He lives detachèd days;
He serveth not for praise;
For gold
He is not sold;

'Deaf is he to world's tongue;
He scorneth for his song
The loud
Shouts of the crowd;

'He asketh not world's eyes;
Not to world's ears he cries;
Saith,—"These
Shut, if ye please!"

'He measureth world's pleasure,
World's ease, as Saints might measure;
For hire
Just love entire

'He asks, not grudging pain;
And knows his asking vain,
And cries—
"Love! Love!" and dies,

'In guerdon of long duty,
Unowned by Love or Beauty;
And goes—
Tell, tell, who knows!

'Aliens from Heaven's worth,
Fine beasts who nose i' the earth,
Do there
Reward prepare.

'But are *his* great desires
Food but for nether fires?
Ah me,
A mystery!

'Can it be his alone,
To find when all is known,
That what
He solely sought

'Is lost, and thereto lost
All that its seeking cost?
That he
Must finally,

'Through sacrificial tears,
And anchoretic years,
Tryst
With the sensualist?'

So ask ; and if they tell
The secret terrible,
Good friend,
I pray thee send

Some high gold embassage
To teach my unripe age.
Tell !
Lest my feet walk hell.

A CORYMBUS FOR AUTUMN

A CORYMBUS FOR AUTUMN

HEARKEN my chant, 'tis
As a Bacchante's,
A grape-spurt, a vine-splash, a tossed
tress, flown vaunt 'tis!
Suffer my singing,
Gipsy of Seasons, ere thou go winging;
Ere Winter throws
His slaking snows
In thy feasting-flagon's impurpurate glows!
The sopped sun—toper as ever drank hard—
Stares foolish, hazed,
Rubicund, dazed,
Totty with thine October tankard.
Tanned maiden! with cheeks like apples russet,
And breast a brown agaric faint-flushing at tip,
And a mouth too red for the moon to buss it
But her cheek unvow its vestalship;
Thy mists enclip
Her steel-clear circuit illuminous,
Until it crust
Rubiginous
With the glorious gules of a glowing rust.

Far other saw we, other indeed,
The crescent moon, in the May-days dead,
Fly up with its slender white wings spread
Out of its nest in the sea's waved mead.

A CORYMBUS FOR AUTUMN

How are the veins of thee, Autumn, laden ?
Umbered juices,
And pulpèd oozes
Pappy out of the cherry-bruises,
Froth the veins of thee, wild, wild maiden !
With hair that musters
In globèd clusters,
In tumbling clusters, like swarthy grapes,
Round thy brow and thine ears o'ershaden ;
With the burning darkness of eyes like pansies,
Like velvet pansies
Wherethrough escapes
The splendid might of thy conflagrate fancies ;
With robe gold-tawny not hiding the shapes
Of the feet whereunto it falleth down,
Thy naked feet unsandallèd ;
With robe gold-tawny that does not veil
Feet where the red
Is meshed in the brown,
Like a rubied sun in a Venice-sail.

The wassailous heart of the Year is thine !
His Bacchic fingers disentwine
His coronal
At thy festival ;
His revelling fingers disentwine
Leaf, flower, and all,
And let them fall
Blossom and all in thy wavering wine.
The Summer looks out from her brazen tower,
Through the flashing bars of July,

Waiting thy ripened golden shower;
Whereof there cometh, with sandals fleet,
The North-west flying viewlessly,
With a sword to sheer, and untameable feet,
And the gorgon-head of the Winter shown
To stiffen the gazing earth as stone.

In crystal Heaven's magic sphere
Poised in the palm of thy fervid hand,
Thou seest the enchanted shows appear
That stain Favonian firmament;
Richer than ever the Occident
Gave up to bygone Summer's wand.
Day's dying dragon lies drooping his crest,
Panting red pants into the West.
Or the butterfly sunset claps its wings
With flitter alit on the swinging blossom,
The gusty blossom, that tosses and swings,
Of the sea with its blown and ruffled bosom;
Its ruffled bosom wherethrough the wind sings
Till the crispèd petals are loosened and strown
Overblown, on the sand;
Shed, curling as dead
Rose-leaves curl, on the fleckèd strand.

Or higher, holier, saintlier when, as now,
All Nature sacerdotal seems, and thou.
The calm hour strikes on yon golden gong,
In tones of floating and mellow light
A spreading summons to even-song:

See how there
The cowlèd Night
Kneels on the Eastern sanctuary-stair.
What is this feel of incense everywhere ?
Clings it round folds of the blanch-amiced clouds,
Upwafted by the solemn thurifer,
The mighty Spirit unknown,
That swingeth the slow earth before the embannered
Throne ?
Or is't the Season under all these shrouds
Of light, and sense, and silence, makes her known
A presence everywhere,
An inarticulate prayer,
A hand on the soothed tresses of the air ?
But there is one hour scant
Of this Titanian, primal liturgy ;
As there is but one hour for me and thee,
Autumn, for thee and thine hierophant,
Of this grave-ending chant.
Round the earth still and stark
Heaven's death-lights kindle, yellow spark by spark,
Beneath the dreadful catafalque of the dark.

And I had ended there :
But a great wind blew all the stars to flare,
And cried, ' I sweep the path before the moon !
Tarry ye now the coming of the moon,
For she is coming soon ' ;
Then died before the coming of the moon.
And she came forth upon the trepidant air,
In vesture unimagined-fair,

Woven as woof of flag-lilies;
And curdled as of flag-lilies
The vapour at the feet of her,
And a haze about her tinged in fainter wise;
As if she had trodden the stars in press,
Till the gold wine spurted over her dress,
Till the gold wine gushed out round her feet;
Spouted over her stainèd wear,
And bubbled in golden froth at her feet,
And hung like a whirlpool's mist round her.

Still, mighty Season, do I see't,
Thy sway is still majestical!
Thou hold'st of God, by title sure,
Thine indefeasible investiture,
And that right round thy locks are native to;
The heavens upon thy brow imperial,
This huge terrene thy ball,
And o'er thy shoulders thrown wide air's depending pall.
What if thine earth be blear and bleak of hue?
Still, still the skies are sweet!
Still, Season, still thou hast thy triumphs there!
How have I, unaware,
Forgetful of my strain inaugural,
Cleft the great rondure of thy reign complete,
Yielding thee half, who hast indeed the all?
I will not think thy sovereignty begun
But with the shepherd Sun
That washes in the sea the stars' gold fleeces;
Or that with Day it ceases,

Who sets his burning lips to the salt brine,
    And purples it to wine;
While I behold how ermined Artemis
    Ordainèd weed must wear,
    And toil thy business;
    Who witness am of her,
Her too in autumn turned a vintager;
And, laden with its lampèd clusters bright,
The fiery-fruited vineyard of this night.

ECCLESIASTICAL BALLADS

[Of this series only two Ballads were completed: 'The Veteran of Heaven'—in some sense a divine parody of Macaulay's 'On the Battle of Naseby'; and a prophetic apostrophe of the Church under the title of 'The Lily of the King.']

I

THE VETERAN OF HEAVEN

O CAPTAIN of the wars, whence won Ye so great scars ?
In what fight did Ye smite, and what manner was the foe ?
Was it on a day of rout they compassed Thee about,
Or gat Ye these adornings when Ye wrought their overthrow ?

'' 'Twas on a day of rout they girded Me about,
They wounded all My brow, and they smote Me through the side :
My hand held no sword when I met their armèd horde,
And the conqueror fell down, and the Conquered bruised his pride.'

What is this, unheard before, that the Unarmed makes war,
And the Slain hath the gain, and the Victor hath the rout ?
What wars, then, are these, and what the enemies,
Strange Chief, with the scars of Thy conquest trenched about ?

'The Prince I drave forth held the Mount of the North,
Girt with the guards of flame that roll round the pole.
I drave him with My wars from all his fortress-stars,
And the sea of death divided that My march might strike its goal.

'In the keep of Northern Guard, many a great dæmonian sword
Burns as it turns round the Mount occult, apart:
There is given him power and place still for some certain days,
And his name would turn the Sun's blood back upon its heart.'

What is *Thy* Name? Oh, show!—'My Name ye may not know;
'Tis a going forth with banners, and a baring of much swords:
But My titles that are high, are they not upon My thigh?
"King of Kings!" are the words, "Lord of Lords!";
It is written "King of Kings, Lord of Lords."'

II

LILIUM REGIS

O LILY of the King! low lies thy silver wing,
And long has been the hour of thine unqueening;
And thy scent of Paradise on the night-wind spills its sighs,
Nor any take the secrets of its meaning.
O Lily of the King! I speak a heavy thing,
O patience, most sorrowful of daughters!
Lo, the hour is at hand for the troubling of the land,
And red shall be the breaking of the waters.

Sit fast upon thy stalk, when the blast shall with thee talk,
With the mercies of the King for thine awning;
And the just understand that thine hour is at hand,
Thine hour at hand with power in the dawning.
When the nations lie in blood, and their kings a broken brood,
Look up, O most sorrowful of daughters!
Lift up thy head and hark what sounds are in the dark,
For His feet are coming to thee on the waters!

O Lily of the King! I shall not see, that sing,
I shall not see the hour of thy queening!
But my Song shall see, and wake like a flower that dawn-winds shake,
And sigh with joy the odours of its meaning.
O Lily of the King, remember then the thing
That this dead mouth sang; and thy daughters,
As they dance before His way, sing there on the Day
What I sang when the Night was on the waters!

TRANSLATIONS

A SUNSET

FROM HUGO'S 'FEUILLES D'AUTOMNE'

I LOVE the evenings, passionless and fair, I love the evens,
Whether old manor-fronts their ray with golden fulgence leavens,
In numerous leafage bosomed close ;
Whether the mist in reefs of fire extend its reaches sheer,
Or a hundred sunbeams splinter in an azure atmosphere
On cloudy archipelagos.

Oh gaze ye on the firmament ! a hundred clouds in motion,
Up-piled in the immense sublime beneath the winds' commotion,
Their unimagined shapes accord :
Under their waves at intervals flames a pale levin through,
As if some giant of the air amid the vapours drew
A sudden elemental sword.

The sun at bay with splendid thrusts still keeps the sullen fold ;
And momently at distance sets, as a cupola of gold,
The thatched roof of a cot a-glance ;
Or on the blurred horizons joins his battle with the haze ;
Or pools the glooming fields about with inter-isolate blaze,
Great moveless meres of radiance.

Then mark you how there hangs athwart the firmament's swept track,
Yonder, a mighty crocodile with vast irradiant back,
A triple row of pointed teeth ?
Under its burnished belly slips a ray of eventide,
The flickerings of a hundred glowing clouds its tenebrous side
With scales of golden mail ensheathe.

Then mounts a palace, then the air vibrates—the vision flees.
Confounded to its base, the fearful cloudy edifice
Ruins immense in mounded wrack :
Afar the fragments strew the sky, and each envermeiled cone
Hangeth, peak downward, overhead, like mountains overthrown
When the earthquake heaves its hugy back.

These vapours, with their leaden, golden, iron, bronzèd glows,
Where the hurricane, the waterspout, thunder, and hell repose,
Muttering hoarse dreams of destined harms,—
'Tis God who hangs their multitude amid the skiey deep,
As a warrior that suspendeth from the roof-tree of his keep
His dreadful and resounding arms !

A SUNSET

All vanishes! The sun, from topmost heaven precipitated,
Like to a globe of iron which is tossed back fiery red
Into the furnace stirred to fume,
Shocking the cloudy surges, plashed from its impetuous ire,
Even to the zenith spattereth in a flecking scud of fire
The vaporous and inflamèd spume.

O contemplate the heavens! Whenas the vein-drawn day dies pale,
In every season, every place, gaze through their every veil,
With love that has not speech for need!
Beneath their solemn beauty is a mystery infinite:
If winter hue them like a pall, or if the summer night
Fantasy them with starry brede.

HEARD ON THE MOUNTAIN

FROM HUGO'S 'FEUILLES D'AUTOMNE'

HAVE you sometimes, calm, silent, let your tread aspirant rise
Up to the mountain's summit, in the presence of the skies ?
Was't on the borders of the South ? or on the Bretagne coast ?
And at the basis of the mount had you the Ocean tossed ?
And there, leaned o'er the wave and o'er the immeasurableness,
Calm, silent, have you hearkened what it says ? Lo, what it says !
One day at least, whereon my thought, enlicensèd to muse,
Had drooped its wing above the beachèd margent of the ooze,
And, plunging from the mountain height into the immensity,
Beheld upon one side the land, on the other side the sea.
I hearkened, comprehended,—never, as from those abysses,
No, never issued from a mouth, nor moved an ear such voice as this is !

A sound it was, at outset, immeasurable, confused,
Vaguer than is the wind among the tufted trees effused,
Full of magnificent accords, suave murmurs, sweet as is
The evensong, and mighty as the shock of panoplies

When the hoarse *mêlée* in its arms the closing squadrons grips,
And pants, in furious breathings, from the clarions' brazen lips.
Unutterable the harmony, unsearchable its deep,
Whose fluid undulations round the world a girdle keep,
And through the vasty heavens, which by its surges are washed young,
Its infinite volutions roll, enlarging as they throng,
Even to the profound arcane, whose ultimate chasms sombre
Its shattered flood englut with time, with space and form and number.
Like to another atmosphere, with thin o'erflowing robe,
The hymn eternal covers all the inundated globe:
And the world, swathed about with this investuring symphony,
Even as it trepidates in the air, so trepidates in the harmony.

And pensive, I attended the ethereal lutany,
Lost within this containing voice as if within the sea.

Soon I distinguished, yet as tone which veils confuse and smother,
Amid this voice two voices, one commingled with the other,
Which did from off the land and seas even to the heavens aspire;
Chanting the universal chant in simultaneous quire.

And I distinguished them amid that deep and rumorous sound,
As who beholds two currents thwart amid the fluctuous profound.

The one was of the waters ; a be-radiant hymnal speech !
That was the voice o' the surges, as they parleyed each with each.
The other, which arose from our abode terranean,
Was sorrowful ; and that, alack ! the murmur was of man ;
And in this mighty quire, whose chantings day and night resound,
Every wave had its utterance, and every man his sound.

Now, the magnificent Ocean, as I said, unbannering
A voice of joy, a voice of peace, did never stint to sing,
Most like in Sion's temples to a psaltery psaltering,
And to creation's beauty reared the great lauds of his song.
Upon the gale, upon the squall, his clamour borne along
Unpausingly arose to God in mere triumphal swell ;
And every one among his waves, that God alone can quell,
When the other of its song made end, into the singing pressed.
Like that majestic lion whereof Daniel was the guest,
At intervals the Ocean his tremendous murmur awed ;
And, toward where the sunset fires fell shaggily and broad,
Under his golden mane, methought that I saw pass the hand of God.

Meanwhile, and side by side with that august fanfaronnade
The other voice, like the sudden scream of a destrier affrayed,
Like an infernal door that grates ajar its rusty throat,
Like to a bow of iron that gnarls upon an iron rote,
Grinded ; and tears, and shriekings, the anathema, the lewd taunt,
Refusal of viaticum, refusal of the font,
And clamour, and malediction, and dread blasphemy, among
That hurtling crowd of rumour from the diverse human tongue,
Went by as who beholdeth, when the valleys thick t'ward night,
The long drifts of the birds of dusk pass, blackening flight on flight.
What was this sound whose thousand echoes vibrated unsleeping ?
Alas ! the sound was earth's and man's, for earth and man were weeping.

Brothers ! of these two voices strange, most unimaginably,
Unceasingly regenerated, dying unceasingly,
Hearkenèd of the Eternal throughout His Eternity,
The one voice uttereth NATURE, and the other voice HUMANITY.

Then I alit in reverie ; for my ministering sprite,
Alack ! had never yet deployed a pinion of an ampler flight,

Nor ever had my shadow endured so large a day to
burn :
And long I rested dreaming, contemplating turn by
turn
Now that abyss obscure which lurked beneath the
water's roll,
And now that other untemptable abyss which opened
in my soul.
And I made question of me, to what issues are we here,
Whither should tend the thwarting threads of all this
ravelled gear ;
What doth the soul ; to be or live if better worth it is ;
And why the Lord, Who, only, reads within that book
of His,
In fatal hymeneals hath eternally entwined
The vintage-chant of nature with the dirging cry of
humankind ?

The metre of the second of these two translations is an experiment. The splendid fourteen syllable metre of Chapman I have treated after the manner of Drydenian rhyming heroics, with the occasional triplet, and even the occasional Alexandrine, a treatment which can well extend, I believe, the majestic resources of the metre.

AN ECHO OF VICTOR HUGO

LIFE'S a veil the real has :
All the shadows of our scene
Are but shows of things that pass
On the other side the screen.

Time his glass sits nodding by ;
'Twixt its turn and turn a spawn
Of universes buzz and die
Like the ephemeris of the dawn.

Turn again the wasted glass !
Kingly crown and warrior's crest
Are not worth the blade of grass
God fashions for the swallow's nest.

Kings must lay gold circlets down
In God's sepulchral ante-rooms,
The wear of Heaven 's the thorny crown :
He paves His temples with their tombs.

O our towered altitudes !
O the lustres of our thrones !
What ! old Time shall have his moods
Like Cæsars and Napoleons ;

Have his towers and conquerors forth,
Till he, weary of the toys,
Put back Rameses in the earth
And break his Ninevehs and Troys.

The first two stanzas and the last are my own : the thoughts of the others are Victor Hugo's. The metre of the original is departed from.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

DREAM-TRYST

THE breaths of kissing night and day
Were mingled in the eastern Heaven :
Throbbing with unheard melody
Shook Lyra all its star-chord seven :
When dusk shrunk cold, and light trod shy,
And dawn's grey eyes were troubled grey ;
And souls went palely up the sky,
And mine to Lucidé.

There was no change in her sweet eyes
Since last I saw those sweet eyes shine ;
There was no change in her deep heart
Since last that deep heart knocked at mine.
Her eyes were clear, her eyes were Hope's,
Wherein did ever come and go
The sparkle of the fountain-drops
From her sweet soul below.

The chambers in the house of dreams
Are fed with so divine an air,
That Time's hoar wings grow young therein,
And they who walk there are most fair.
I joyed for me, I joyed for her,
Who with the Past meet girt about :
Where our last kiss still warms the air,
Nor can her eyes go out.

ARAB LOVE-SONG

THE hunchèd camels of the night*
Trouble the bright
And silver waters of the moon.
The Maiden of the Morn will soon
Through Heaven stray and sing,
Star gathering.

Now while the dark about our loves is strewn,
Light of my dark, blood of my heart, O come!
And night will catch her breath up, and be dumb.

Leave thy father, leave thy mother
And thy brother;
Leave the black tents of thy tribe apart!
Am I not thy father and thy brother,
And thy mother?
And thou—what needest with thy tribe's black tents
Who hast the red pavilion of my heart?

* Cloud-shapes observed by travellers in the East.

BUONA NOTTE

Jane Williams, in her last letter to Shelley, wrote: 'Why do you talk of never enjoying moments like the past? Are you going to join your friend Plato, or do you expect I shall do so soon? Buona Notte.' This letter was dated July 6th, and Shelley was drowned on the 8th. These verses are supposed to be addressed to Jane by the poet's spirit while his body is tossing on the waters of Spezzia.

ARIEL to Miranda :—Hear
This good-night the sea-winds bear ;
And let thine unacquainted ear
Take grief for their interpreter.

Good-night ! I have risen so high
Into slumber's rarity,
Not a dream can beat its feather
Through the unsustaining ether.
Let the sea-winds make avouch
How thunder summoned me to couch,
Tempest curtained me about
And turned the sun with his own hand out :
And though I toss upon my bed
My dream is not disquieted ;
Nay, deep I sleep upon the deep,
And my eyes are wet, but I do not weep ;
And I fell to sleep so suddenly
That my lips are moist yet—could'st thou see—
With the good-night draught I have drunk to thee.
Thou canst not wipe them ; for it was Death
Damped my lips that has dried my breath.

A little while—it is not long—
The salt shall dry on them like the song.
Now know'st thou that voice desolate,—
Mourning ruined joy's estate,—
Reached thee through a closing gate.
'Go'st thou to Plato?' Ah, girl, no!
It is to Pluto that I go.

THE PASSION OF MARY

VERSES IN PASSION-TIDE

O LADY Mary, thy bright crown
Is no mere crown of majesty;
For with the reflex of His own
Resplendent thorns Christ circled thee.

The red rose of this Passion-tide
Doth take a deeper hue from thee,
In the five wounds of Jesus dyed,
And in thy bleeding thoughts, Mary!

The soldier struck a triple stroke,
That smote thy Jesus on the tree:
He broke the Heart of Hearts, and broke
The Saint's and Mother's hearts in thee.

Thy Son went up the angels' ways,
His passion ended; but, ah me!
Thou found'st the road of further days
A longer way of Calvary:

On the hard cross of hope deferred
Thou hung'st in loving agony,
Until the mortal-dreaded word
Which chills *our* mirth, spake mirth to thee.

The angel Death from this cold tomb
Of life did roll the stone away;
And He thou barest in thy womb
Caught thee at last into the day,
Before the living throne of Whom
The Lights of Heaven burning pray.

L'ENVOY

O thou who dwellest in the day!
  Behold, I pace amidst the gloom:
Darkness is ever round my way
  With little space for sunbeam-room.

Yet Christian sadness is divine
  Even as *thy* patient sadness was:
The salt tears in our life's dark wine
  Fell in it from the saving cross.

Bitter the bread of our repast;
  Yet doth a sweet the bitter leaven:
Our sorrow is the shadow cast
  Around it by the light of Heaven.

O light in Light, shine down from Heaven!

MESSAGES

WHAT shall I your true-love tell,
Earth-forsaking maid ?
What shall I your true-love tell,
When life's spectre's laid ?

'Tell him that, our side the grave,
Maid may not conceive
Life should be so sad to have,
That's so sad to leave ! '

What shall I your true-love tell,
When I come to him ?
What shall I your true-love tell—
Eyes growing dim !

'Tell him this, when you shall part
From a maiden pined ;
That I see him with my heart,
Now my eyes are blind.'

What shall I your true-love tell ?
Speaking-while is scant.
What shall I your true-love tell,
Death's white postulant ?

'Tell him—love, with speech at strife,
For last utterance saith :
I, who loved with all my life,
Love with all my death.'

AT LORD'S

IT is little I repair to the matches of the Southron folk,
Though my own red roses there may blow;
It is little I repair to the matches of the Southron folk,
Though the red roses crest the caps, I know.
For the field is full of shades as I near the shadowy coast,
And a ghostly batsman plays to the bowling of a ghost,
And I look through my tears on a soundless-clapping host
As the run-stealers flicker to and fro,
To and fro:—
O my Hornby and my Barlow long ago!

LOVE AND THE CHILD

'WHY do you so clasp me,
And draw me to your knee ?
Forsooth, you do but chafe me,
I pray you let me be :
I will be loved but now and then
When it liketh me ! '

So I heard a young child,
A thwart child, a young child
Rebellious against love's arms,
Make its peevish cry.

To the tender God I turn :—
' Pardon, Love most High !
For I think those arms were even Thine,
And that child was even I.'

DAPHNE

THE river-god's daughter,—the sun-god sought her,
Sleeping with never a zephyr by her.
Under the noon he made his prey sure,
Woofed in weeds of a woven azure,
As down he shot in a whistle of fire.

Slid off, fair daughter! her vesturing water;
Like a cloud from the scourge of the winds fled she:
With the breath in her hair of the keen Apollo,
And feet less fleet than the feet that follow,
She throes in his arms to a laurel-tree.

Risen out of birth's waters the soul distraught errs,
Nor whom nor whither she flieth knows she:
With the breath in her hair of the keen Apollo,
And fleet the beat of the feet that follow,
She throes in his arms to a poet, woe's me!

You plucked the boughed verse the poet bears—
It shudders and bleeds as it snaps from the tree.
A love-banning love, did the god but know it,
Which barks the man about with the poet,
And muffles his heart of mortality!

Yet I translate—ward of song's gate!—
Perchance all ill this mystery.
We both are struck with the self-same quarrel;
We grasp the maiden, and clasp the laurel—
Do we weep or we laugh more, *Phœbe mi?*

'His own green lays, unwithering bays,
Gird Keats' unwithering brow,' say ye?
O fools, that is only the empty crown!
The sacred head has laid it down
With Hob, Dick, Marian, and Margery.

ABSENCE

WHEN music's fading 's faded,
And the rose's death is dead,
And my heart is fain of tears, because
Mine eyes have none to shed ;
I said,
Whence shall faith be fed ?

Canst thou be what thou hast been ?
No, no more what thou hast !
Lo, all last things that I have known,
And all that shall be last,
Went past
With the thing thou wast !

If the petal of this Spring be
As of the Spring that 's flown,
If the thought that now is sweet is
As the sweet thought overblown ;
Alone
Canst thou be thy self gone.

To yester-rose a richer
The rose-spray may bear ;
Thrice thousand fairer you may be,—
But tears for the fair
You were
When you first were fair !

Know you where they have laid her,
Maiden May that died—

ABSENCE

With the loves that lived not
  Strowing her soft side ?
    I cried,
Where Has-been may hide ?

To him that waiteth, all things !
  Even death, if thou wait !
And they that part too early
  May meet again too late :—
    Ah, fate !
If meeting be too late !

And when the year new-launchèd
  Shall from its wake extend
The blossomy foam of Summer,
  What shall I attend,
    My friend !
Flower of thee, my friend ?

Sweet shall have its sorrow,
  The rainbow its rain,
Loving have its leaving,
  And bliss is of pain
    So fain,
Ah, is she bliss or pain ?

TO W. M.

O TREE of many branches! One thou hast
Thou barest not, but grafted'st on thee. Now,
Should all men's thunders break on thee, and leave
Thee reft of bough and blossom, that one branch
Shall cling to thee, my Father, Brother, Friend,
Shall cling to thee, until the end of end.

A FALLEN YEW

IT seemed corrival of the world's great prime,
Made to un-edge the scythe of Time,
And last with stateliest rhyme.

No tender Dryad ever did indue
That rigid chiton of rough yew,
To fret her white flesh through:

But some god like to those grim Asgard lords,
Who walk the fables of the hordes
From Scandinavian fjords,

Upheaved its stubborn girth, and raised unriven,
Against the whirl-blast and the levin,
Defiant arms to Heaven.

When doom puffed out the stars, we might have said,
It would decline its heavy head,
And see the world to bed.

For this firm yew did from the vassal leas,
And rain and air, its tributaries,
Its revenues increase,

And levy impost on the golden sun,
Take the blind years as they might run,
And no fate seek or shun.

But now our yew is strook, is fallen—yea,
Hacked like dull wood of every day
To this and that, men say.

Never !—To Hades' shadowy shipyards gone,
Dim barge of Dis, down Acheron
It drops, or Lethe wan.

Stirred by its fall—poor destined bark of Dis !—
Along my soul a bruit there is
Of echoing images,

Reverberations of mortality :
Spelt backward from its death, to me
Its life reads saddenedly.

Its breast was hollowed as the tooth of eld ;
And boys, there creeping unbeheld,
A laughing moment dwelled.

Yet they, within its very heart so crept,
Reached not the heart that courage kept
With winds and years beswept.

And in its boughs did close and kindly nest
The birds, as they within its breast,
By all its leaves caressed.

But bird nor child might touch by any art
Each other's or the tree's hid heart,
A whole God's breadth apart ;

The breadth of God, the breadth of death and life !
Even so, even so, in undreamed strife
With pulseless Law, the wife,—

A FALLEN YEW

The sweetest wife on sweetest marriage-day,—
Their souls at grapple in mid-way,
Sweet to her sweet may say :

'I take you to my inmost heart, my true!'
Ah, fool! but there is one heart you
Shall never take him to!

The hold that falls not when the town is got,
The heart's heart, whose immurèd plot
Hath keys yourself keep not!

Its ports you cannot burst—you are withstood—
For him that to your listening blood
Sends precepts as he would.

Its gates are deaf to Love, high summoner;
Yea, Love's great warrant runs not there:
You are your prisoner.

Yourself are with yourself the sole consortress
In that unleaguerable fortress;
It knows you not for portress.

Its keys are at the cincture hung of God;
Its gates are trepidant to His nod;
By Him its floors are trod.

And if His feet shall rock those floors in wrath,
Or blest aspersion sleek His path,
Is only choice it hath.

Yea, in that ultimate heart's occult abode
To lie as in an oubliette of God,
Or in a bower untrod,

Built by a secret Lover for His Spouse;—
Sole choice is this your life allows,
Sad tree, whose perishing boughs
So few birds house!

A JUDGEMENT IN HEAVEN

ATHWART the sod which is treading for God * the Poet paced with his splendid eyes ;
Paradise-verdure he stately passes * to win to the Father of Paradise,
Through the conscious and palpitant grasses * of inter-tangled relucent dyes.

The angels a-play on its fields of Summer * (their wild wings rustled his guides' cymars)
Looked up from disport at the passing comer, * as they pelted each other with handfuls of stars ;
And the warden-spirits with startled feet rose, * hand on sword, by their tethered cars.

With plumes night-tinctured englobed and cinctured * of Saints, his guided steps held on
To where on the far crystálline pale * of that transtellar Heaven there shone
The immutable crocean dawn * effusing from the Father's Throne.

Through the reverberant Eden-ways * the bruit of his great advent driven,
Back from the fulgent justle and press * with mighty echoing so was given,
As when the surly thunder smites * upon the clangèd gates of Heaven.

I have throughout this poem used an asterisk to indicate the caesura in the middle of the line, after the manner of the old Saxon section-point.

Over the bickering gonfalons, * far-ranged as for Tartarean wars,
Went a waver of ribbèd fire * —as night-seas on phosphoric bars
Like a flame-plumed fan shake slowly out * their ridgy reach of crumbling stars.

At length to where on His fretted Throne * sat in the heart of His aged dominions
The great Triune, and Mary nigh, * lit round with spears of their hauberked minions,
The Poet drew, in the thunderous blue * involvèd dread of those mounted pinions.

As in a secret and tenebrous cloud * the watcher from the disquiet earth
At momentary intervals * beholds from its raggèd rifts break forth
The flash of a golden perturbation, * the travelling threat of a witchèd birth;

Till heavily parts a sinister chasm, * a grisly jaw, whose verges soon,
Slowly and ominously filled * by the on-coming plenilune,
Supportlessly congest with fire, * and suddenly spit forth the moon:—

With beauty, not terror, through tangled error * of night-dipt plumes so burned their charge;

Swayed and parted the globing clusters * so,—— disclosed from their kindling marge,
Roseal-chapleted, splendent-vestured, * the Poet there where God's light lay large.

Hu, hu ! a wonder ! a wonder ! see, * clasping the Poet's glories clings
A dingy creature, even to laughter * cloaked and clad in patchwork things,
Shrinking close from the unused glows * of the seraphs' versicoloured wings.

A Rhymer, rhyming a futile rhyme, * he had crept for convoy through Eden-ways
Into the shade of the Poet's glory, * darkened under his prevalent rays,
Fearfully hoping a distant welcome * as a poor kinsman of his lays.

The angels laughed with a lovely scorning : * — ' Who has done this sorry deed in
The garden of our Father, God ? * 'mid his blossoms to sow this weed in ?
Never our fingers knew this stuff : * not so fashion the looms of Eden ! '

The Poet bowed his brow majestic, * searching that patchwork through and through,
Feeling God's lucent gazes traverse * his singing-stoling and spirit too :

The hallowed harpers were fain to frown * on the strange thing come 'mid their sacred crew.
Only the Poet that was earth * his fellow-earth and his own self knew.

Then the Poet rent off robe and wreath, * so as a sloughing serpent doth,
Laid them at the Rhymer's feet, * shed down wreath and raiment both,
Stood in a dim and shamèd stole, * like the tattered wing of a musty moth.

(*The Poet addresses his Maker*)
' Thou gav'st the weed and wreath of song, * the weed and wreath are solely Thine,
And this dishonest vesture * is the only vesture that is mine;
The life *I* textured, Thou the song: * —— *my* handicraft is not divine! '

(*The Poet addresses the Rhymer*)
He wrested o'er the Rhymer's head * that garmenting which wrought him wrong;
A flickering tissue argentine * down dripped its shivering silvers long:—
' Better thou wov'st thy woof of life * than thou didst weave thy woof of song! '

Never a chief in Saintdom was, * but turned him from the Poet then;

Never an eye looked mild on him * 'mid all the angel myriads ten,
Save sinless Mary, and sinful Mary * —the Mary titled Magdalen.

' Turn yon robe,' spake Magdalen, * ' of torn bright song, and see and feel.'
They turned the raiment, saw and felt * what their turning did reveal—
All the inner surface piled * with bloodied hairs, like hairs of steel.

' Take, I pray, yon chaplet up, * thrown down ruddied from his head.'
They took the roseal chaplet up,* and they stood astonishèd :
Every leaf between their fingers,* as they bruised it, burst and bled.

' See his torn flesh through those rents ;* see the punctures round his hair,
As if the chaplet-flowers had driven * deep roots in to nourish there—
Lord, who gav'st him robe and wreath,* *what* was this Thou gav'st for wear ? '

' Fetch forth the Paradisal garb ! ' * spake the Father, sweet and low ;
Drew them both by the frightened hand * where Mary's throne made irised bow—
' Take, Princess Mary, of thy good grace,* two spirits greater than they know.'

EPILOGUE TO

'A JUDGEMENT IN HEAVEN'

VIRTUE may unlock hell, or even
A sin turn in the wards of Heaven,
(As ethics of the text-book go,)
So little men their own deeds know,
Or through the intricate *mêlée*
Guess witherward draws the battle-sway ;
So little, if they know the deed,
Discern what therefrom shall succeed.
To wisest moralists 'tis but given
To work rough border-law of Heaven,
Within this narrow life of ours,
These marches 'twixt delimitless Powers.
Is it, if Heaven the future showed,
Is it the all-severest mode
To see ourselves with the eyes of God ?
God rather grant, at His assize,
He see us not with our own eyes !

Heaven, which man's generations draws,
Nor deviates into replicas,
Must of as deep diversity
In judgement as creation be.
There is no expeditious road
To pack and label men for God,
And save them by the barrel-load.
Some may perchance, with strange surprise,
Have blundered into Paradise.
In vasty dusk of life abroad,

They fondly thought to err from God,
Nor knew the circle that they trod;
And, wandering all the night about,
Found them at morn where they set out.
Death dawned; Heaven lay in prospect wide:—
Lo! they were standing by His side!

The Rhymer a life uncomplex,
With just such cares as mortals vex,
So simply felt as all men feel,
Lived purely out to his soul's weal.
A double life the Poet lived,
And with a double burthen grieved;
The life of flesh and life of song,
The pangs to both lives that belong;
Immortal knew and mortal pain,
Who in two worlds could lose and gain,
And found immortal fruits must be
Mortal through his mortality.
The life of flesh and life of song!
If one life worked the other wrong,
What expiating agony
May for him, damned to poesy,
Shut in that little sentence be—
What deep austerities of strife—
'He lived his life.' He lived *his* life!

THE SERE OF THE LEAF

WINTER wore a flapping wind, and his beard, disentwined,
Blew cloudy in the face of the Fall,
When a poet-soul flew South, with a singing in her mouth,
O'er the azure Irish parting-wall. *
There stood one beneath a tree whose matted greenery
Was fruited with the songs of birds;
By the melancholy water drooped the slender sedge, its daughter,
Whose silence was a sadness passing words:
He held him very still,
And he heard the running rill,
And the soul-voice singing blither than the birds.

All Summer the sunbeams drew the curtains from the dreams
Of the rose-fay, while the sweet South wind
Lapped the silken swathing close round her virginal repose
When night swathed folding slumbers round her mind.
Now the elf of the flower had sickened in her bower,
And fainted in a thrill of scent;
But her lover of the South, with a moan upon his mouth,
Caught her spirit to his arms as it went:
Then the storms of West and North
Sent a gusty vaward forth,
Sent a skirring desolation, and he went.

* Miss Katharine Tynan's visit to London, 1889.

And a troop of roving gales rent the lily's silver veils,
  And tore her from her trembling leaves ;
And the Autumn's smitten face flushed to a red disgrace,
  And she grieved as a captive grieves.
Once the gold-barred cage of skies with the sunset's moulted dyes
  Was splendorously littered at the even ;
Beauty-fraught o'er shining sea, once the sun's argosy
  To rich wreck on the Western reefs was driven ;
    Now the sun, in Indian pall,
    Treads the russet-amber fall
From the ruined trees of Heaven.

Too soon fails the light, and the swart boar, night,
  Gores to death the bleeding day ;
And the dusk has no more a calm at its core,
  But is turbid with obscene array.
For the cloud, a thing of ill dilating baleful o'er the hill,
  Spreads a bulk like a huge Afreet
Drifting in gigantic sloth, or a murky behemoth,
  For the moon to set her silver feet ;
    For the moon's white paces,
    And its nostril for her traces,
As she urges it with wild witch feet.

And the stars, forlornly fair, shiver keenly through the air,
  All an-aching till their watch be ceased ;
And the hours like maimed flies lag on, ere night hatch her golden dragon

In the mold of the upheaved East.
'As the cadent languor lingers after Music droops her fingers,
Beauty still falls dying, dying through the days;
But ah!' said he who stood in that Autumn solitude,
'Singing-soul, thou art 'lated with thy lays!
All things that on this globe err
Fleet into dark October,
When day and night encounter, the nights war down the days.

'For the song in thy mouth is all of the South,
Though Winter wax in strength more and more,
And at eve with breath of malice the stained windows of day's palace
Pile in shatters on the Western floor.'
But the song sank down his soul like a Naiad through her pool,
He could not bid the visitant depart;
For he felt the melody make tune like a bee
In the red rose of his heart:
Like a Naiad in her pool
It lay within his soul,
Like a bee in the red rose of his heart.

She sang of the shrill East fled and bitterness surceased:—
'O the blue South wind is musical!
And the garden 's drenched with scent, and my soul hath its content,
This eve or any eve at all.'

On his form the blushing shames of her ruby-plumaged flames
Flickered hotly, like a quivering crimson snow:
'And hast thou thy content? Were some rain of it besprent
On the soil where I am drifted to and fro,
My soul, blown o'er the ways
Of these arid latter days,
Would blossom like a rose of Jericho.

'I know not equipoise, only purgatorial joys,
Grief's singing to the soul's instrument,
And forgetfulness which yet knoweth that it doth forget;
But content—what is content?
For a harp of singeing wire, and a goblet dripping fire,
And desires that hunt down Beauty through the Heaven
With unslackenable bounds, as the deep-mouthed thunder-hounds
Bay at heel the fleeing levin,—
The chaliced lucencies
From pure holy-wells of eyes,
And the bliss unbarbed with pain I have given.

'Is—O framed to suffer joys!—*thine* the sweet without alloys
Of the many, who art numbered with the few?
And thy flashing breath of song, does it do *thy* lips no wrong,
Nor sear them as the heats spill through?
When the welling musics rise, like tears from heart to eyes,

Is there not a pang dissolved in them for thee ?
Does not Song, like the Queen of radiant Love, Hellene,
Float up dripping from a bitter sea ?
No tunèd metal known
Unless stricken yields a tone,
Be it silver, or sad iron like to me.

' Yet the rhymes still roll from the bell-tower of thy soul,
Though no tongued griefs give them vent ;
If they ring to me no gladness, if *my* joy be sceptred sadness,
I am glad, yet, for *thy* content.
Not always does the lost, 'twixt the fires of heat and frost,
Envy those whom the healing lustres bless ;
But may sometimes, in the pain of a yearning past attain,
Thank the angels for their happiness ;
'Twixt the fire and fiery ice,
Looking up to Paradise,
Thank the angels for their happiness.

'The heart, a censered fire whence fuming chants aspire,
Is fed with oozèd gums of precious pain ;
And unrest swings denser, denser, the fragrance from that censer,
With the heart-strings for its quivering chain.
Yet 'tis vain to scale the turret of the cloud-uplifted spirit,
And bar the immortal in, the mortal out ;

For sometime unaware comes a footfall up the stair,
And a soft knock under which no bolts are stout,
And lo, there pleadeth sore
The heart's voice at the door,
" I am your child, you may not shut me out ! "

' The breath of poetry in the mind's autumnal tree
Shakes down the saddened thoughts in singing showers,
But fallen from their stem, what part have we in them ?
" Nay," pine the trees, "they were, but are not ours."
Not for the mind's delight these serèd leaves alight,
But, loosened by the breezes, fall they must.
What ill if they decay ? yet some a little way
May flit before deserted by the gust,
May touch some spirit's hair,
May cling one moment there,—
She turns ; they tremble down. Drift o'er them, dust ! '

TO STARS

YOU, my unrest, and Night's tranquillity,
Bringers of peace to it, and pang to me:
You that on heaven and on my heart cast fire,
To heaven a purging light, my heart unpurged desire;
Bright juts for foothold to the climbing sight
Which else must slip from the steep infinite;
Reared standards which the sequent centuries
Snatch, each from his forerunner's grasp who dies,
To lead our forlorn hope upon the skies;
Bells that from night's great bell-tower hang in gold,
Whereon God rings His changes manifold;
Meek guides and daughters to the blinded heaven
In Œdipean, remitless wandering driven;
The burning rhetoric, quenchless oratory,
Of the magniloquent and all-suasive sky;
I see and feel you—but to feel and see
How two child-eyes have dulled a firmament for me.

Once did I bring her, hurt upon her bed,
Flowers we had loved together; brought, and said:—
'I plucked them; yester-morn you liked them wild.'
And then she laid them on my eyes, and smiled.
And now, poor Stars, your fairness is not fair,
Because I cannot gather it for her;
I cannot sheave you in my arms, and say:—
'See, sweet, you liked these yester-eve; like them for *me* to-day!'

She has no care, my Stars, of you or me;
She has no care, we tire her speedily;

TO STARS

She has no care, because she cannot see—
She cannot see, who sees not past her sight.
We are set too high, we tire her with our height:
Her years are small, and ill to strain above.
She may not love us: wherefore keep we love
To her who may not love us—you and I?
And yet you thrill down towards her, even as I,
With all your golden eloquence held in mute.
We may not plead, we may not plead our suit;
Our wingèd love must beat against its bars:
For should she enter once within those guarding bars,
Our love would do her hurt—oh, think of that, my Stars!

LINES FOR A DRAWING OF OUR LADY OF THE NIGHT

THIS, could I paint my inward sight,
This were Our Lady of the Night:

She bears on her front's lucency
The starlight of her purity:

For as the white rays of that star
The union of all colours are,

She sums all virtues that may be
In her sweet light of purity.

The mantle which she holds on high
Is the great mantle of the sky.

Think, O sick toiler, when the night
Comes on thee, sad and infinite,

Think, sometimes, 'tis our own Lady
Spreads her blue mantle over thee,

And folds the earth, a wearied thing,
Beneath its gentle shadowing;

Then rest a little; and in sleep
Forget to weep, forget to weep!

ORISON-TRYST

SHE told me, in the morning her white thought
Did beat to Godward, like a carrier-dove,
My name beneath its wing. And I—how long!—
That, like a bubble from a water-flower
Released as it withdraws itself up-curled
Into the nightly lake, her sighèd name
So loosened from my sleepward-sinking heart;
And in the morning did like Phosphor set it
To lead the vanward of my orient soul
When it storms Heaven; and did all alone,
Methought, upon the live coals of my love
Those distillations of rich memory cast
To feed the fumes of prayer:—oh! I was then
Like one who, dreaming solitude, awakes
In sobbing from his dream; and, straining arms
That ache for their own void, with sudden shock
Takes a dear form beside him.

Now, when light
Pricks at my lids, I never rouse but think—
'Is 't orison-time with her?'—And then my hand
Presses thy letters in my pulses shook;
Where, neighboured on my heart with those pure lines
In amity of kindred pureness, lies
Image of Her conceived Immaculate;
And on the purple inward, thine,—ah! thine
O' the purple-linèd side.

And I do set
Tryst with thy soul in its own Paradise;
As lovers of an earthly rate that use,
In severance, for their sweet messages
Some concave of a tree, and do their hearts

Enharbour in its continent heart—I drop
My message in the hollow breast of God.
Thy name is known in Heaven ; yea, Heaven is weary
With the reverberation of thy name ;
I fill with it the gap between two sleeps,
The inter-pause of dream : hell's gates have learned
To shake in it ; and their fierce forayers
Before the iterate echoing recoil,
In armèd watches when my preparate soul
(A war-cry in the alarums of the Night)
Conjoins thy name with Hers, Auxiliatrix.

'WHERETO ART THOU COME?'

'FRIEND, whereto art thou come?' Thus Verity;
Of each that to the world's sad Olivet
Comes with no multitude, but alone by night,
Lit with the one torch of his lifted soul,
Seeking her that he may lay hands on her;
Thus: and waits answer from the mouth of deed.
Truth is a maid, whom men woo diversely;
This, as a spouse; that, as a light-o'-love,
To know, and having known, to make his brag.
But woe to him that takes the immortal kiss,
And not estates her in his housing life,
Mother of all his seed! So he betrays,
Not Truth, the unbetrayable, but himself:
And with his kiss's rated traitor-craft
The Haceldama of a plot of days
He buys, to consummate his Judasry
Therein with Judas' guerdon of despair.

SONG OF THE HOURS

SCENE : Before the Palace of the Sun, into which a god has just passed as the guest of Hyperion. TIME : *Dawn. The Hours of Night and Day advance on each other as the gates close.*

MORNING HOURS

IN curbed expanses our wheeling dances
Meet from the left and right ;
Under this vaporous awning
Tarrying awhile in our flight,
Waiting the day's advances,
We, the children of light,
Clasp you on verge of the dawning,
Sisters of Even and Night !

CHORUS

We who lash from the way of the sun
With the whip of the winds the thronging clouds,
Who puff out the lights of the stars, or run
To scare dreams back to their shrouds,
Or tiar the temples of Heaven
With a crystalline gleam of showers ;

EVENING HOURS

While to flit with the soft moth, Even,
Round the lamp of the day is ours ;

NIGHT HOURS

And ours with her crescent argentine,
To make Night's forehead fair,
To wheel up her throne of the earth, and twine
The daffodils in her hair ;

SONG OF THE HOURS

ALL

We, moulted as plumes are,
From the wings whereon Time is borne;

MORNING HOURS

We, buds who in blossoming foretell
The date when our leaves shall be torn;

NIGHT HOURS

We, knowing our dooms are to plunge with the gloom's car
Down the steep ruin of morn;

ALL

We hail thee, Immortal!
We robes of Life, mouldering while worn.

NIGHT HOURS

Sea-birds, winging o'er sea calm-strewn
To the lure of the beacon-stars, are we,
O'er the foamy wake of the white-sailed moon,
Which to men is the Galaxy.

MORNING HOURS

Our eyes, through our pinions folden,
By the filtered flame are teased
As we bow when the sun makes golden
Earthquake in the East.

EVENING HOURS

And *we* shake on the sky a dusted fire
From the ripened sunset's anther,
While the flecked main, drowsing in gorged desire,
Purrs like an outstretched panther.

MORNING HOURS

O'er the dead moon-maid
We draw softly the day's white pall;
And our children the Moments we see as
In drops of the dew they fall,
Or on light plumes laid they shoot the cascade
Of colours some Heaven's bow call;

ALL

And we sing, Guest, to thee, as
Thou pacest the crystal-paved hall!

We, while the sun with his hid chain swings
Like a censer around him the blossom-sweet earth,
Who dare the lark with our passionate wings,
And its mirth with our masterless mirth;
Or—when that flying laughter
Has sunk and died away
Which beat against Heaven's rafter—
Who vex the clear eyes of day,
Who weave for the sky in the loom of the cloud
A mantle of waving rain,
We, whose hair is jewelled with joys, or bowed
Under veilings of misty pain;

We hymn thee at leaving
Who strew thy feet's coming, O Guest!
We, the linked cincture which girdles
Mortality's feverous breast,
Who heave in its heaving, who grieve in its grieving,
Are restless in its unrest;
Our beings unstirred else
Were it not for the bosom they pressed.

We see the wind, like a light swift leopard
Leap on the flocks of the cloud that flee,
As we follow the feet of the radiant shepherd
Whose bright sheep drink of the sea.
When that drunken Titan the Thunder
Stumbles through staggered Heaven,
And spills on the scorched earth under
The fiery wine of the levin,
With our mystic measure of rhythmic motion
We charm him in snorting sleep,
While round him the sun enchants from ocean
The walls of a cloudy keep.
Beneath the deep umbers
Of night as we watch and hark,
The dim-wingèd dreams which feed on
The blossoms of day we mark,
As in murmurous numbers they swarm to the slumbers
That cell the hive of the dark;
And life shakes, a reed on
Our tide, in the death-wind stark.

Time, Eternity's fountain, whose waters
  Fall back thither from whence they rose,
Deweth with us, its showery daughters,
  The Life that is green in its flows.
But whether in grief or mirth we shower,
  We make not the thing we breed,
For what may come of the passing Hour
  Is what was hid in the seed.
    And now as wakes,
      Like love in its first blind guesses,
    Or a snake just stirring its coils,
      Sweet tune into half-caresses,
    Before the sun shakes the clinging flakes
      Of gloom from his spouting tresses,
    Let winds have toils
      To catch at our fluttering dresses!
Winter, that numbeth the throstle and stilled wren,
  Has keen frost-edges our plumes to pare,
Till we break, with the Summer's laughing children,
  Over the fields of air.
      While the winds in their tricksome courses
        The snowy steeds vault upon
      That are foaled of the white sea-horses
        And washed in the streams of the sun.
Thaw, O thaw the enchanted throbbings
  Curdled at Music's heart;
Tread she her grapes till from their englobings
  The melodies spurt and smart!
      We fleet as a rain,
        Nor yearn for the being men own,

With whom is naught beginneth
Or endeth without some moan ;
We soar to our zenith
And are panglessly overblown.

Yet, if the roots of the truth were bare,
Our transience is only a mortal seeming ;
Fond men, we are fixed as a still despair,
And we fleet but in your dreaming.
We are columns in Time's hall, mortals,
Wherethrough Life hurrieth ;
You pass in at birth's wide portals,
And out at the postern of death.
As you chase down the vista your dream or your love
The swift pillars race you by,
And you think it is we who move, who move,—
It is you who die, who die !
O firmament, even
You pass, by whose fixture man voweth ;
God breathes you forth as a bubble
And shall suck you back into His mouth !
Through earth, sea, and heaven a doom shall be driven,
And, sown in the furrows it plougheth,
As fire bursts from stubble
Shall spring the new wonders none troweth.

The bowed East lifteth the dripping sun,
A golden cup, to the lips of Night,
Over whose cheek in flushes run
The heats of the liquid light.

MORNING HOURS

To our very pinions' ridge
We tremble expectantly ;—
Is it ready, the burnished bridge
We must cast for our King o'er the sea ?
And who will kneel with sunbeam-slips
To dry the flowers' sweet eyes ?
Who touch with fire her finger-tips
For the lamp of the grape, as she flies ?

ALL

List, list to the prances, his chariot advances,
It comes in a dust of light !
From under our brightening awning
We wheel in a diverse flight :
Yet the hands we unclasp, as our dances
Sweep off to the left and the right,
Are but loosed on the verge of the dawning
To join on the verge of the night.

PASTORAL

PAN-imbued
Tempe wood,
Pretty player's sporting-place;
Tempe wood's
Solitude's
Everywhere a courting-place.
Kiss me, sweet
Gipsy fleet,
Though a kissed maid hath her red;
Kisses grow—
Trust me so—
Faster than they're gatherèd!
I will flute a tune
On the pipes of ivory;
All long noon
Piping of a melody;
A merry, merry, merry, merry,
Merry, merry melody.
Dance, ho! foot it so! Feat fleets the melody!

Let the wise
Say, youth dies;—
'Tis for pleasure's mending, Sweet!
Kisses are
Costlier far,
That they have an ending, Sweet!
Half a kiss's
Dainty bliss is
From the day of kiss-no-more;

When we shall,
Roseal
Lass, do this and this no more!
And we pipe a tune
On the pipes of ivory;
All long noon
Fluting of a melody:—
A merry, merry, merry, merry,
Merry, merry melody.
Dance, ho! trip it so! Feat fleets the melody!

My love must
Be to trust,
While you safely fold me close:
Yours will smile
A kissing-while,
For the hours I hold you close.
Maiden gold!
Clipping bold
Here the truest mintage is:
Lips will bear
But, I swear,
In the press their vintages!
I will flute a tune
On the pipes of ivory;
All long noon
Piping of a melody:—
A merry, merry, merry, merry,
Merry, merry melody.
Dance, ho! foot it so! Feat fleets the melody!

PAST THINKING OF SOLOMON

Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the years draw nigh of which thou shalt say : They please me not ; before the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the stars be darkened, and the clouds return after the rain.
ECCLESIASTES.

WISE-UNTO-HELL Ecclesiast,
Who siev'dst life to the gritted last !

This thy sting, thy darkness, Mage—
Cloud upon sun, upon youth age ?

Now is come a darker thing,
And is come a colder sting,

Unto us, who find the womb
Opes on the courtyard of the tomb.

Now in this fuliginous
City of flesh our sires for us

Darkly built, the sun at prime
Is hidden, and betwixt the time

Of day and night is variance none,
Who know not altern moon and sun ;

Whose deposed heaven through dungeon-bars
Looks down blinded of its stars.

Yea, in the days of youth, God wot,
Now we say : They please me not.

A DEAD ASTRONOMER

STEPHEN PERRY, S.J.

STARRY amorist, starward gone,
Thou art—what thou didst gaze upon!
Passed through thy golden garden's bars,
Thou seest the Gardener of the Stars.

She, about whose moonèd brows
Seven stars make seven glows,
Seven lights for seven woes;
She, like thine own Galaxy,
All lustres in one purity:—
What said'st thou, Astronomer,
When thou did'st discover *her?*
When thy hand its tube let fall,
Thou found'st the fairest Star of all!

CHEATED ELSIE

ELSIE was a maiden fair
As the sun
Shone upon :
Born to teach her swains despair
By smiling on them every one ;
Born to win all hearts to her
Just because herself had none ;
All the day she had no care,
For she was a maiden fair
As the sun
Shone upon,
Heartless as the brooks that run.

All the maids, with envy tart,
Sneering said, ' She has no heart.'
All the youths, with bitter smart,
Sighing said, ' She has no heart ! '
Could she care
For their sneers or their despair
When she was a maiden fair
As the sun
Shone upon,
Heartless as the brooks that run ?

But one day whenas she stood
In a wood
Haunted by the fairy brood,
Did she view, or dream she viewed
In a vision's
Wild misprisions,

How a pedlar, dry and rude
As a crook'd branch taking flesh,
Caught the spirit in a mesh,
Singing of—'What is't ye lack?'
Wizard-pack
On twisted back,
Still he sang, 'What is't ye lack?

'Lack ye land or lack ye gold,
What I give, I give unsold;
Lack ye wisdom, lack ye beauty,
To your suit he
Gives unpaid, the pedlar old!'

Fairies.

Beware, beware! the gifts he gives
One pays for, sweetheart, while one lives!

Elsie.

What is it the maidens say
That I lack?

Pedlar.

By this bright day,
Can so fair a maiden lack?
Maid so sweet
Should be complete.

Elsie.

Yet a thing they say I lack.
In thy pack,—
Pedlar, tell—
Hast thou ever a heart to sell?

Pedlar.

Yea, a heart I have, as tender
As the mood of evening air.

Elsie.

Name thy price!

Pedlar.

The price, by Sorrow!
Only is, the heart to wear.

Elsie.

Not great the price, as was my fear.

Fairies.

So cheap a price was ne'er so dear.
Beware, beware,
O rash and fair!
The gifts he gives,
Sweetheart, one pays for while one lives!

Scarce the present did she take,
When the heart began to ache.

Elsie.

Ah, what is this? Take back thy gift!
I had not, and I knew no lack;
Now I have, I lack for ever!

Fairies.

The gifts he gives, he takes not back.

Elsie.

Ah! why the present did I take,
And knew not that a heart would ache?

Fairies.

Ache! and is that all thy sorrow?—
Beware, beware—a heart will break!

THE FAIR INCONSTANT

DOST thou still hope thou shalt be fair,
When no more fair to me ?
Or those that by thee taken were
Hold their captivity ?
Is this thy confidence ? No, no ;
Trust it not ; it can not be so.

But thou too late, too late shalt find
'Twas I that made thee fair ;
Thy beauties never from thy mind
But from my loving were ;
And those delights that did thee stole
Confessed the vicinage of my soul.

The rosy reflex of my heart
Did thy pale cheek attire ;
And what I was, not what thou art,
Did gazers-on admire.
Go, and too late thou shalt confess
I looked thee into loveliness !

THREATENED TEARS

DO not loose those rains thy wet
Eyes, my Fair, unsurely threat;
Do not, Sweet, do not so!
Thou canst not have a single woe,
But this sad and doubtful weather
Overcasts us both together.
In the aspèct of those known eyes
My soul 's a captain weatherwise.
Ah me! what presages it sees
In those watery Hyades.

THE HOUSE OF SORROWS*

I

OF the white purity
They wrought my wedding-dress,
Inwoven silverly—
For tears, as I do guess.
Oh, why did they with tears inweave my marriage-dress?

A girl, I did espouse
Destiny, grief, and fears;
The love of Austria's house
And its ancestral years
I learned; and my salt eyes grew erudite in tears.

Devote our tragic line—
One to his rebel's aim,
One to his ignorant brine,
One to the eyeless flame:
Who should be skilled to weep but I, O Christ's dear Dame?

[*In the opening stanzas the Empress Elizabeth of Austria addresses first Our Lady, then the 'Dark Fool' Death, and finally the Son of Sorrows, in allusion to the griefs of her own and her husband's line: the shooting of Maximilian of Mexico, her sister's burning at the Paris Bazar de la Charité, the drowning of the Archduke John and of the mad King of Bavaria, and the tragedy of the Crown Prince Rudolph. Her own assassination was the immediate occasion of these verses; and the traditional offering of her wedding-wreath to a Madonna-shrine and the making of her wedding-gown into priestly vestments elucidate other references in the text.]

Give one more to the fire,
One more for water keep:
O Death, wilt thou not tire?
Still Austria must thou reap?
Can I have plummetless tears, that still thou bidd'st
'Weep, weep!'?

No—thou at length with me
Too far, Dark Fool, hast gone!
One costly cruelty
Voids thy dominion:
I am drained to the uttermost tear: O Rudolph, O my son!

Take this woof of sorrows,
Son of all Women's Tears!
I am not for the morrows,
I am dead with the dead years.
Lo, I vest Thee, Christ, with my woven tears!

My bridal wreath take thou,
Mary! Take Thou, O Christ,
My bridal garment! Now
Is all my fate sufficed,
And, robed and garlanded, the victim sacrificed.

II

The Son of Weeping heard,
The gift benignly saw;
The Women's Pitier heard.

Together, by hid law,
The life-gashed heart, the assassin's healing poniard, draw.

Too long that consummation
The obdurate seasons thwart;
Too long were the sharp consolation
And her breast apart;—
The remedy of steel has gone home to her sick heart.

Her breast, dishabited,
Revealed, her heart above,
A little blot of red,—
Death's reverent sign to approve
He had sealed up that royal tomb of martyred love.

Now, Death, if thou wouldst show
Some ruth still left in store,
Guide thou the armèd blow
To strike one bosom more,
Where any blow were pity, to this it struck before!

INSENTIENCE

O SWEET is Love, and sweet is Lack!
But is there any charm
When Lack from round the neck of Love
Drops her languid arm?

Weary, I no longer love,
Weary, no more lack;
O for a pang, that listless Loss
Might wake, and, with a playmate's voice,
Call the tired Love back!

ENVOY

GO, songs, for ended is our brief, sweet play;
Go, children of swift joy and tardy sorrow:
And some are sung, and that was yesterday,
And some unsung, and that may be to-morrow.

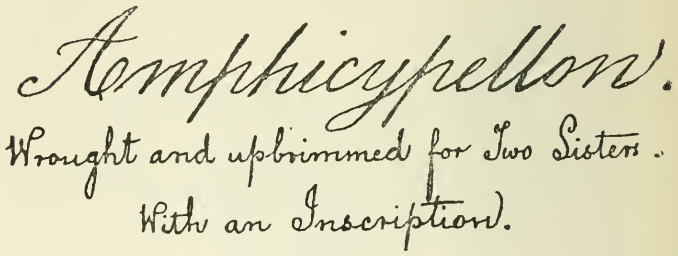
Go forth; and if it be o'er stony way,
Old joy can lend what newer grief must borrow:
And it was sweet, and that was yesterday,
And sweet is sweet, though purchasèd with sorrow.

Go, songs, and come not back from your far way:
And if men ask you why ye smile and sorrow,
Tell them ye grieve, for your hearts know To-day,
Tell them ye smile, for your eyes know To-morrow.

NOTE

'*SISTER SONGS.*' This was first called 'Amphicypellon: Wrought and upbrimmed for Two Sisters, with an Inscription,' as may be seen in the Facsimile, which shows also the Cross with which the Poet was accustomed to crest his Manuscript.

+



The original edition contained the following Preface:

'This poem, though new in the sense of being now (1895) for the first time printed, was written some four years ago, about the same date as the *Hound of Heaven*. . . .

'One image in the *Proem* was an unconscious plagiarism from the beautiful image in Mr Patmore's *St Valentine's Day*:

> O baby Spring,
> That flutter'st sudden 'neath the breast of Earth,
> A month before the birth!

Finding I could not disengage it without injury to the passage in which it is embedded, I have preferred to leave it, with this acknowledgement to a Poet rich enough to lend to the poor.—FRANCIS THOMPSON.'

Printed in England at the Anchor Press.

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